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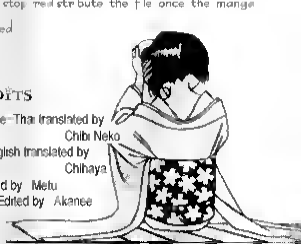

CREDITS

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This manga is to be read from Left to Right

HE HAS BEEN STRANGLED
INTO SUPPRESSION
HIS BREATH WAS QUENCHED
TO REPRESS ALL OF HIS FEELINGS
FOR ME

IF I MEAN BUSINESS, IT WILL NOT BE
A PRETTY SIGHT.
THIS IS NOT SOMETHING TO BE TREATED AS A JOKE!
SAN GET SU!!
What's wrong?
CHATTER
Usual MO is crying?
Huh?

ALL OF THEM..
YOUR LIFE..
YOUR HEART
YOUR POWER
NO MATTER HOW STRONG, THEY WILL BE CRUSHED TO NOTHING.
BE PRE-PARED,
WHEN I HAVE TO GO ALL OUT AT YOU...

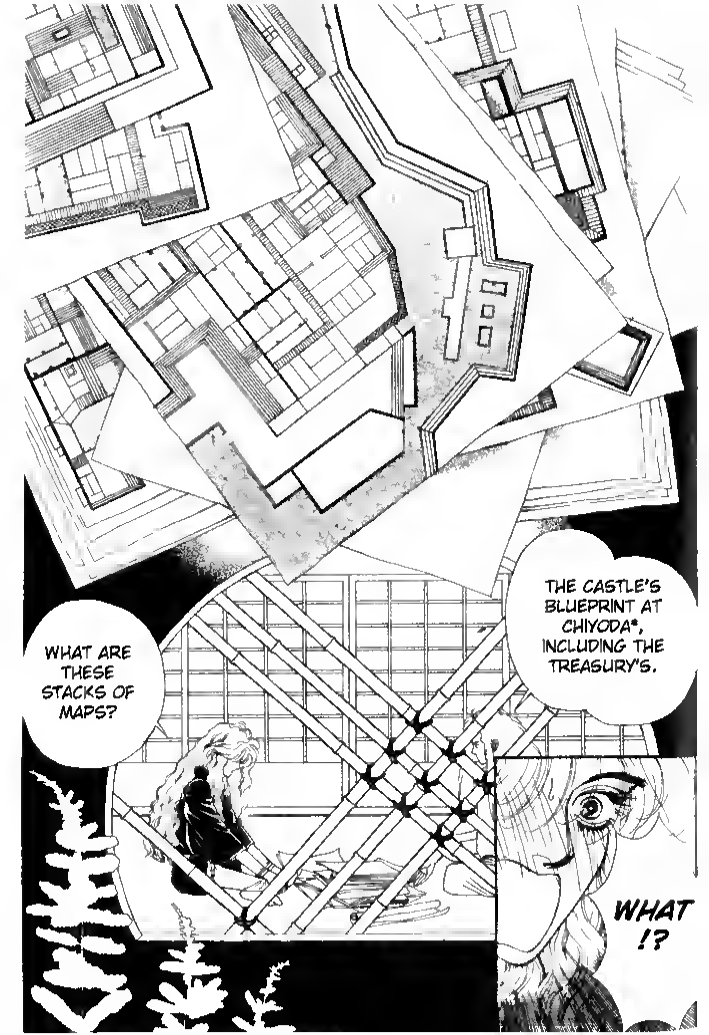
WHAT'S WRONG, TSUKIYA? USUGUMO?
PLEASE DANCE SOME MORE.
SAN GETSU !

WHAT'S GOING ON?
USUGUMO-CHAN WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
USUGUMO-CHAN, YOU HAVE KNOWN TSUKI-SAMA FROM BEFORE
WHAT'S YOUR RELATION-SHIP WITH HIM!?
THE PERSON I LOVE IS DOCTOR AOTO

THE PER-
SON I LOVE
IS DOCTOR
AOTO.
THE FERSON
I LOVE
IS
DOCTOR
AOTO
!!
WHY
!
!!

SFX CLACK CLACK CLACK
SAN GETSU!
KASHIN ?
YES
YOU DELIBE RATELY LET THE OPPORTU-NITY SLIP
YOU KNOW USUGUMO. EVEN THOUGH YOU CAPTURE HER ALIVE, SHE IS NOT THE KIND OF GIRL WHO WE CAN PUPPET AT OUR WILL.
WE'RE BETTER OFF DISPOSING HER AND SET UP A DUMMY PRINCESS SUZAKU-SAMA IS MORE LIKELY TO APPROVE OF THAT
KASHIN YOU MUST..
CAN NOT WAIT TO GET RID OF USUGUMO, DON'T YOU?

SINCE YOU HAVE A PERSONAL AGENDA WITH HER
Shut up!
Sangetsu, if you are not making a move,
I'll handle it myself
YOU CAN'T JUST ACT OUT OF YOUR EMOTION!
I should be the one saying that!
DON'T FORGET
THAT WE NEED TO GET THE SHOGUN'S AUTHENTICATION DOCUMENT FIRST, KASHIN!



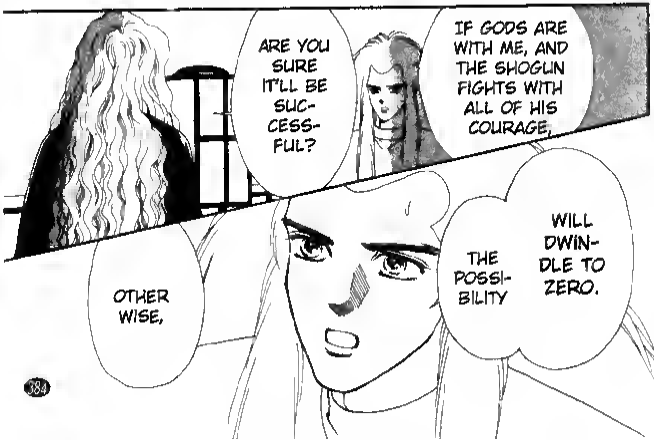
*CHIYODA = THE LOCATION OF THE EDO CASTLE

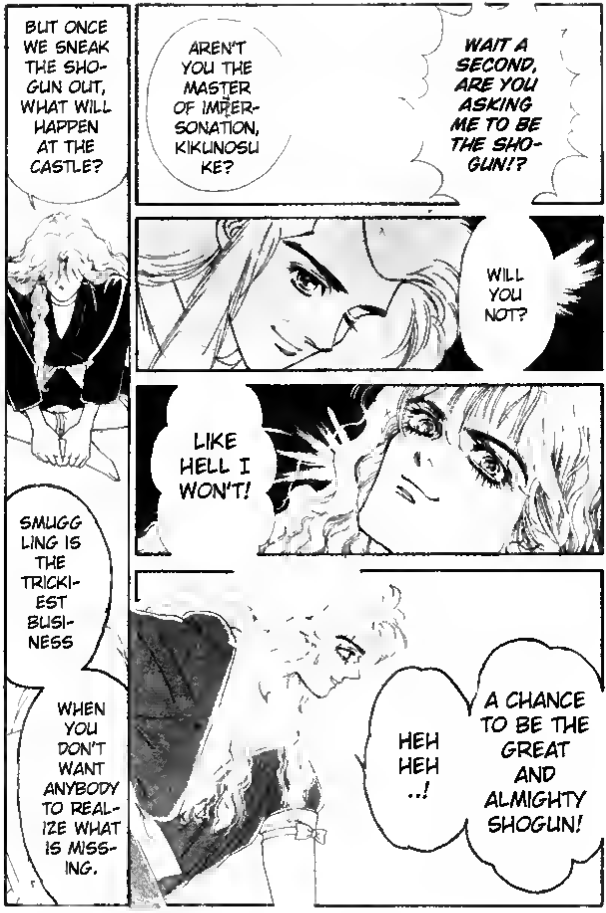
THE SHOGUN REQUESTED US TO STEAL SOMETHING FROM THERE.
FROM EDO CASTLE!? LIKE MONEY IN THE TREASURY!? ALL RIGHT!!
Yeah!
NO.
IT'S A PERSON.
TO BE EXACT.. THE SHOGUN HIMSELF.
ก๊อ~~ง
SFX GONG
WELL.. IF THE SHOGUN REMAINS AT THE CASTLE,
THE SHOGUN ...!?
T
HE, USUGUMO'S FATHER, WILL ONLY LIVE FOR A YEAR.

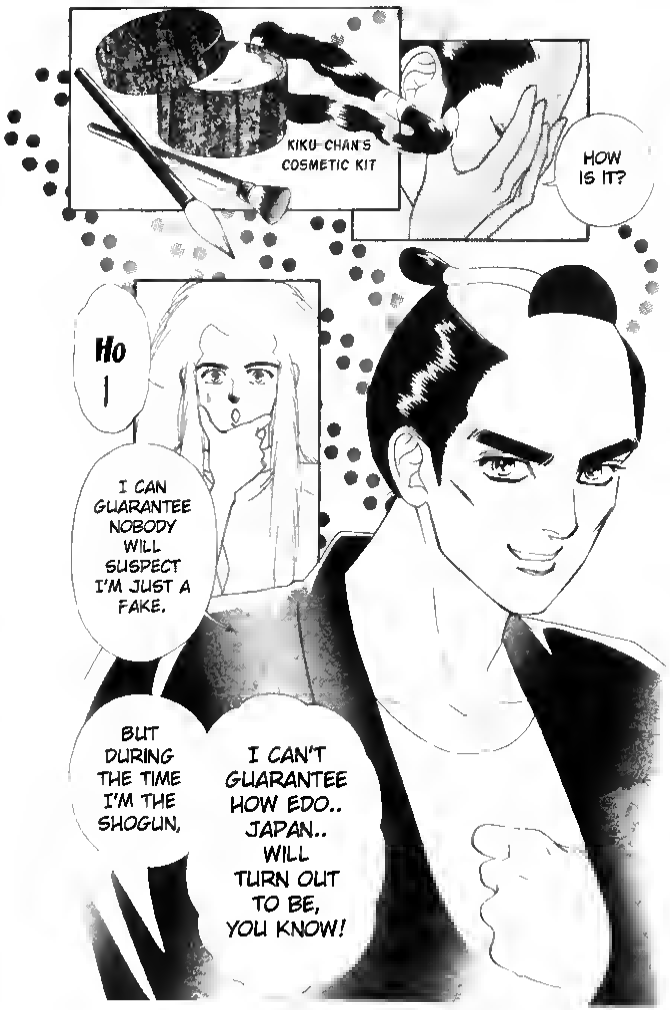
The so-called surgery during Edo-era was performed without anesthetic until 1805 (Edo's 2nd Bunka year), when Surgeon Hanaoka Seishuu performed a breast cancer operation using general anesthesia

for the first time in the world's medical history.

Therefore, the shogun's abdominal operation without anesthetic was extremely risky.


ARE YOU SURE IT'LL BE SUC-CESS-FUL?
IF GODS ARE WITH ME, AND THE SHOGUN FIGHTS WITH ALL OF HIS COURAGE,
OTHER WISE,
THE POSSI-BILITY
WILL DWIN-DLE TO ZERO.


BUT ONCE WE SNEAK THE SHOGUN OUT, WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE CASTLE?
AREN'T YOU THE MASTER OF IMPERSONATION, KIKUNOSUKE?
WAIT A SECOND, ARE YOU ASKING ME TO BE THE SHOGUN!?
WILL YOU NOT?
LIKE HELL I WON'T!
SMUGGLING IS THE TRICKIEST BUSINESS
WHEN YOU DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO REALIZE WHAT IS MISSING.
HEH HEH ..!
A CHANCE TO BE THE GREAT AND ALMIGHTY SHOGUN!


KIKU-CHAN'S COSMETIC KIT
HOW IS IT?
Ho
I CAN GUARANTEE NOBODY WILL SUSPECT I'M JUST A FAKE.
BUT DURING THE TIME I'M THE SHOGUN,
I CAN'T GUARANTEE HOW EDO.. JAPAN.. WILL TURN OUT TO BE, YOU KNOW!

THE AIR IS UNMOVING
THE WIND CHIME BELOW TSURISHINOBU* IS SOUNDLESS
*TSURISHINOBU = JAPANESE SUMMER WREATH MADE OF EPIPHYTIC PLANT. BOTH TSURISHINOBU AND FUUIN (JAPANESE WIND CHIME) ARE USUALLY HUNG FROM THE EAVES OF THE HOUSE AS DECORATIVE ORNAMENTS TO EASE THE HEAT OF SUMMER.
USUI GUMO.
I SAW THE DUO DANCE AT THE MAIN GATE.
DOCTOR AOTO CHERISHES THE GROUND YOU WALK UPON AND YOU STILL DID THAT WITH ANOTHER MAN!

THE AIR IS UN-MOVING
NOT EVEN A FAINTEST BREEZE OF THE WIND
DON'T YOU DARE TRY HIDDING IT FROM ME. I UNDERSTAND IT FULLY WELL!
YOU'RE TOYING WITH THEM. BOTH DOCTOR AND TSUKIYA!
WORDS ARE HUSHED UP
UNDER THE WATER LILIES' SHADOWS
USUGUMO
...

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO YOSHIWARA, YOU WEREN'T EVEN 10 YET. A TRULY OBNOXIOUS BRAT YOU WERE.

YOU MIGHT HAVE BECOME AN OIRAN, A RIVAL TO ME IN BEAUTY AND CHARM BUT YOU ARE STILL A COLTISH ROOKIE IN THE MATTER OF HEART.

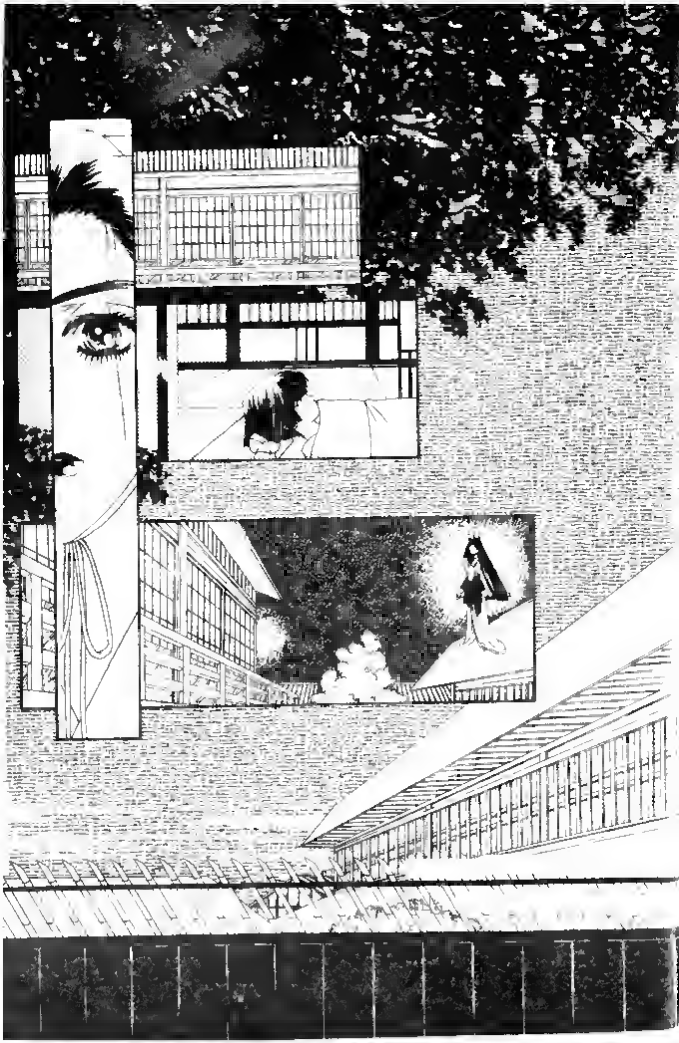
YOU ARE NOW AT AGE TO BE IN ANGUISH WITH LOVE
⋮

CHICK
I CAN'T HELP THINKING OF TSUKIYA.
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ...!
I AM .. TRULY DE-CEIT-FUL
DECEIT FUL
IT'S LIKE SOME-THING IS CHOKING IN MY CHEST..!
USUI GUMO ..

TAKAO-SAN MUST BE IN LOVE WITH DOCTOR AOTO ALL ALONG, AREN'T YOU?
HAH!
YOU BET I AM!
I MAY SELL MY BODY BUT NOT MY HEART.
ANYONE WHO ABANDONS THAT PRINCIPAL SHOULDN'T CALL HERSELF A WOMAN!
MY MOTHER ALSO..
ALWAYS STAYED TRUE TO HER HEART.
IF ONLY MY HEART WAS AS FAITHFUL AS HERS,

SANTA MARIA, SANTA MARIA
HOLY LADY OF THE FORBIDDEN RELIGION
IT WOULDN'T BE SHAKEN LIKE THIS.
WHAT KIND OF LOVE DID YOU GO THROUGH...?
DON'T BE WORRIED, USUGUMO.
I'M THE GRACEFUL TAKAODAYUU OF YOSHIWARA'S 5TH DISTRICT.
I'M NOT GOING TO TELL ON DOCTOR AOTO ABOUT YOU.
THANK YOU, TAKAO-SEMPAI.

AH
SFX CLINKKK
TALKING TO YOU
SURE MAKES ME FEEL A LOT BETTER!
SFX RUN
.....



USU GUMO,
IN THE PAST 4 YEARS, I'VE ALWAYS SEEN YOU AS MY OWN SISTER
BUT ..
THAT AND THIS, ARE DIFFERENT MATTERS.
I MUST KILL YOU TONIGHT.
NO MATTER WHAT!

JUMP
SURGE
!!
Why stopping, Sangetsu?

SU ZA KU- SA MA !!
IN THE END..
YOU'VE BE- TRAYED ME AFTER ALL, HAVEN'T YOU?

AAGHHH!

DON'T PANIC!

IT'S JUST AN ILLUSION WEAVED BY SUZAKU-SAMA
DON'T GIVE UP. DON'T LET IT TAKE OVER YOUR CONSCIENCE.
YES ...
IT IS JUST AN ILLU-SION
BUT IT'S AN ILLUSION THAT WILL CRUSH YOUR BODY
AND PENE-TRATE INTO YOUR SOUL FAR MORE INTENSE THAN THE REALITY.

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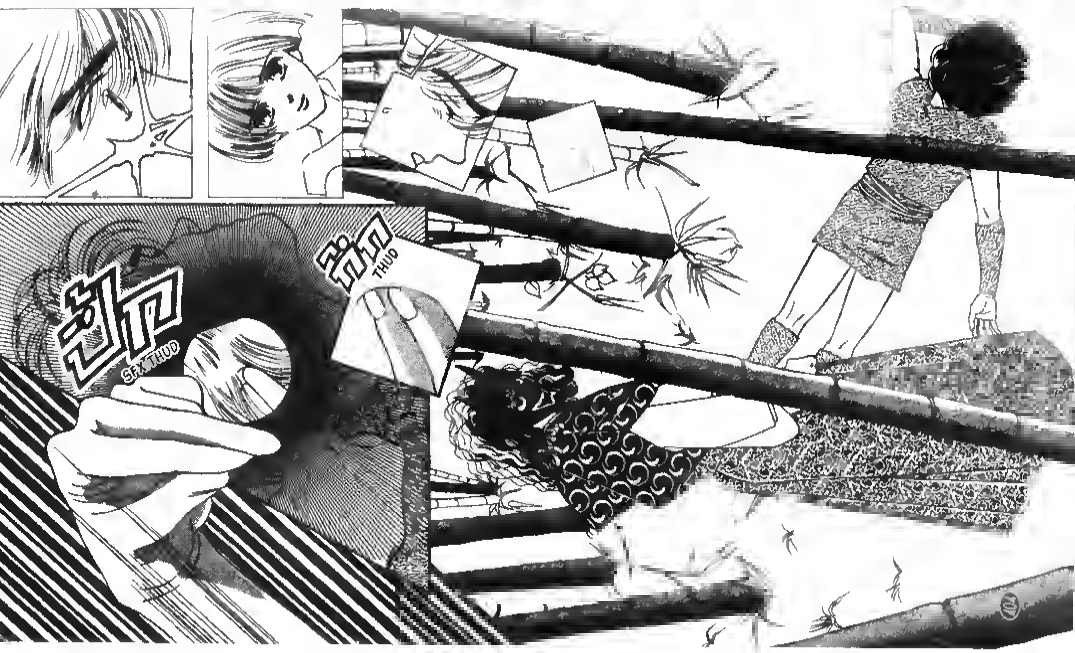
I'll just erase
the memory
the source of your betrayal.
NO !!
DON'T!


SPLAT
THUD

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IT'S NOT HERE!
HELLO, SIS.
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THIS?

GRAB
GAHH!
THUD
O-OH!
USHI NO KOKU MAIRI.. I SEE.
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT.
THAT JIROKICHI'S WILD GUESS WOULD BE SURPRISINGLY ACCURATE

BUT I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU.

THIS 5-SUN NAIL IS MADE OF SILVER.

A LITTLE EXTREME FOR AN ORDINARY USHI NO KOKU MAIRI, DON'T YOU THINK?

HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT THERE WAS A SORCERER CLAN NAMED KASHIN, WHO WAS LOYAL TO CHIEF KASHIN KOGI, THE SORCERER

WHO HAD SPECIAL CONTACT WITH ODA NOBUNAGA* AND TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI**.

THESE PEOPLE EXCELLED IN SPELLS AND ENCHANTMENTS, ESPECIALLY EVIL CURSES.

THE MEMBERS OF KASHIN CLAN WERE KNOWN TO USE A SILVER NAIL IN THEIR TASK, NOT AN IRON ONE..

JUMP

STOP !!

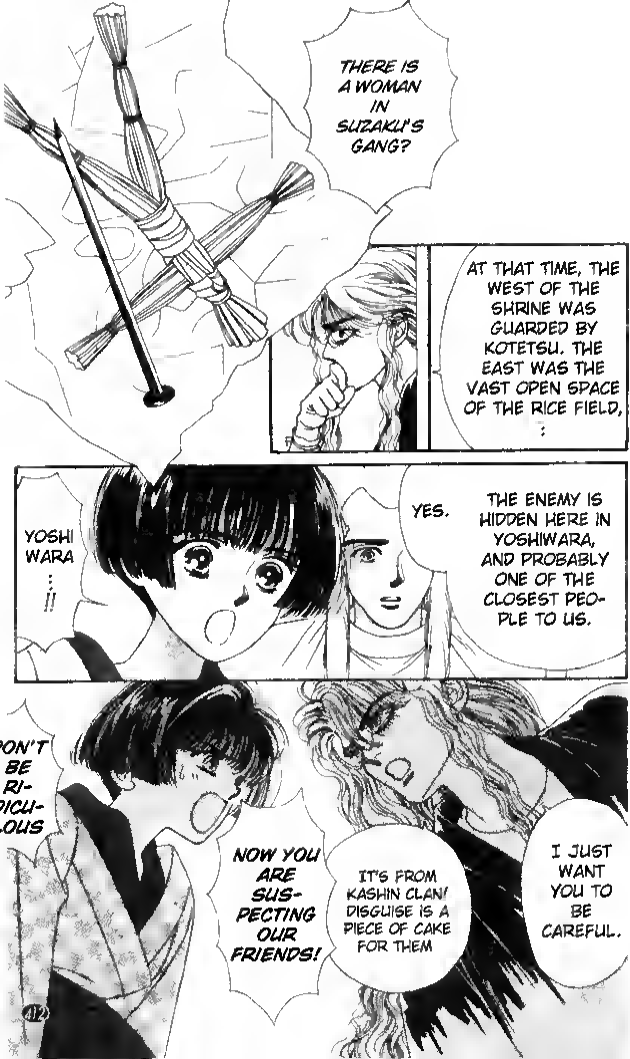
*Oda Nobunaga – A famous major daimyo during 15th century. Nobunaga lived a life of continuous military conquest eventually conquering most of Japan

**Toyotomi Hideyoshi – Another powerful daimyo + successor of Oda Nobunaga's legacy. Known as the daimyo who unified Japan

GRAB
LET ME SEE YOUR FACE!
SFX FLAP FLAP
SFX ATTACK
AGHHH!

SFX FLAP FLAP
SFX FLAP FLAP
SFX HO HO HO
SFX HO HO
OUCH!
AAGHHH !!
D
DARN IT!

TAKE THIS!
SFX THUD THUD
DARN!
SHE GOT ME!


THERE IS A WOMAN IN SUZAKU'S GANG?
AT THAT TIME, THE WEST OF THE SHRINE WAS GUARDED BY KOTETSU. THE EAST WAS THE VAST OPEN SPACE OF THE RICE FIELD,
YOSHI WARA ...!!
YES.
THE ENEMY IS HIDDEN HERE IN YOSHIWARA, AND PROBABLY ONE OF THE CLOSEST PEOPLE TO US.
DON'T BE RI-DICU-LOUS
NOW YOU ARE SUS-PECTING OUR FRIENDS!
IT'S FROM KASHIN CLAN! DISGUISE IS A PIECE OF CAKE FOR THEM
I JUST WANT YOU TO BE CAREFUL.

ANYWAY, USHI NO KOKU MAIRI IS NOT A PROBLEM NOW. WE FOUND THE NAIL AND THE DOLL BEFOREHAND.
NOW YOU CAN ENJOY YOUR PEACEFUL SLUMBER, USUGUMO
HMM ⋮
THANK YOU. ⋮
MIND YOUR ⋮
FIRE ⋮
PLEASE ...EE
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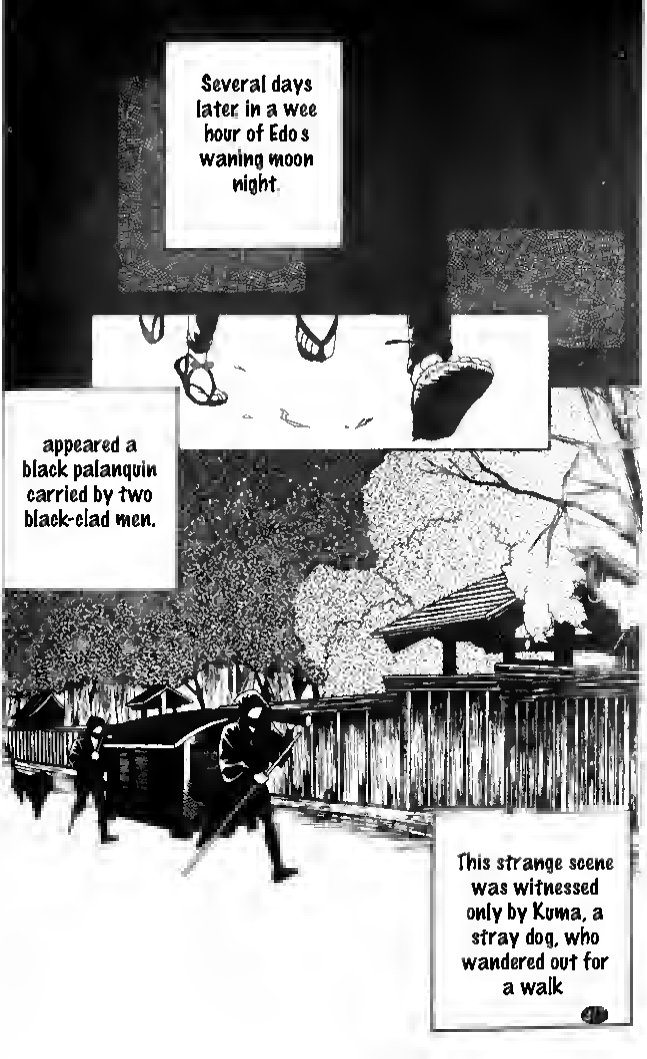
EVER SINCE KIKUNOSUKE DESTROYED THE CURSE LAST NIGHT
BUT A DREAM CAME TO TAKE ITS PLACE
I HEARD SANGETSU'S VOICE REACHING OUT FOR ME FROM THE DARKNESS
THE PAIN IN MY CHEST HAS DIS-APPEARED
USUGUMO !
CALLING ME
I LOVE YOU.

WHATEVER HAPPENS,
I'LL NEVER CHANGE MY HEART FOR YOU
FORGET NOT... THAT I LOVE YOU.
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A PLEASANT DREAM FOR ME
BUT ONCE I HAVE OPENED MY EYES
WHAT IS THIS SUDDEN UNEASI-NESS?
⋮

DURING THE TIME THAT WE WERE APART
THE LOVE IN MY HEART HAS BLOSSOMED THE EVER-GROWING CONCERN RIOTS INSIDE
EVER SINCE THE INTENSITY OF HIS EYES HAS ENGRAVED INTO MY HEART,
I CANNOT DENY MY FEELINGS
SANGET SU, YOU MUST NOT GIVE UP!


Several days later in a wee hour of Edo's waning moon night.
appeared a black palanquin carried by two black-clad men.
This strange scene was witnessed only by Kuma, a stray dog, who wandered out for a walk

Behind the palanquin was a huge dark creature as black as midnight following like a shadow..

Yes, it was a monster that looked like a giant black cat 5th time of Kuma s size.

This promptly frightened Kuma to fall over on his back.

UUUUU

THUD

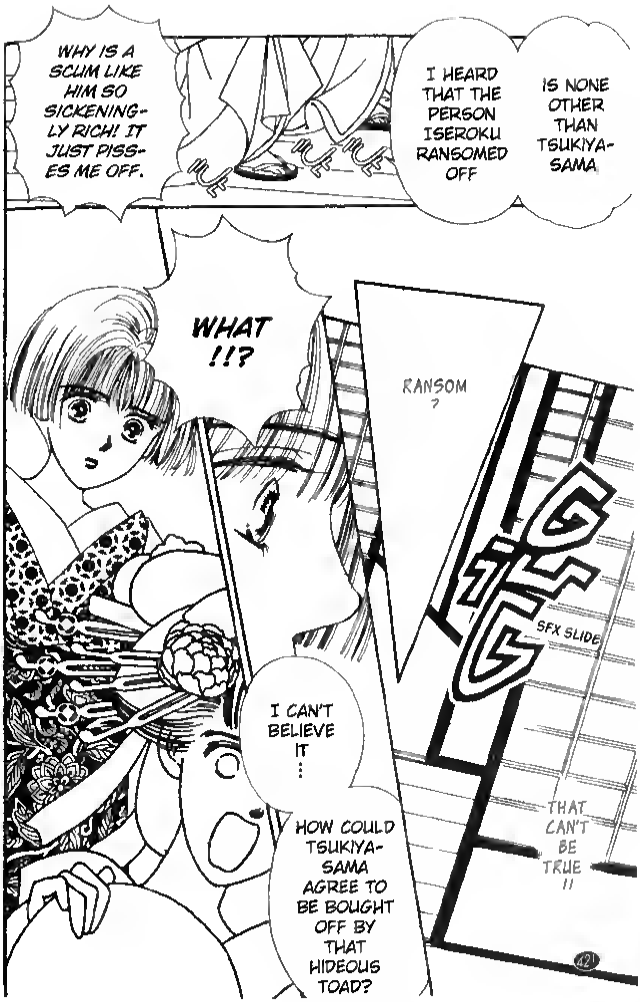
STOP

But when snooping closer, he found that

the mysterious palanquin stopped at O-tamaike at Higashi Kanda district.

I'LL GO BACK TO THE CASTLE NOW.
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF IT FOR ME.
Kuma, the stray dog, then realized
USUGUMO MUST NOT KNOW ABOUT THIS.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR.
The Mitsuba Aoi* family crest and that aristocratic face were not mistakable
The news of The shogun being secretly snuck out to O-tamaike
spreaded among Edo s stray cats and dogs like wildfire.
But not to a single human s ear.
* Mitsuba Aoi = Tokugews Shogunate s family crest

Mi
ura
GUESS WHO IS THE SOCHIMAI GUEST TONIGHT?
Sochimai is when someone pays for all courtesans in the house for a night, which requires a shocking amount of money.
WHO?
IT'S ISE ROKU! ISEYA ROKUBE !
EWW! THAT DIS-GUSTING PER-SON!?
LOOKS LIKE HE RANSOMED OFF A KAGEMA FROM YOSHI MACHI
AND BROUGHT HIM HERE FOR AN ANNOUNCE-MENT PARTY.
WHAT !!
THAT'S LIKE A SLAP ON THE FACE TO YOSHI WARA!


WHY IS A SCUM LIKE HIM SO SICKENINGLY RICH! IT JUST PISSES ME OFF.
I HEARD THAT THE PERSON ISEROKU RANSOMED OFF
IS NONE OTHER THAN TSUKIYA-SAMA
WHAT !!?
RANSOM ?
SFX SLIDE
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT ⋮
HOW COULD TSUKIYA-SAMA AGREE TO BE BOUGHT OFF BY THAT HIDEOUS TOAD?
THAT CAN'T BE TRUE !!

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TONIGHT'S CELEBRATION IS TO DECLARE THAT TSUKIYA IS NOW A PROPERTY OF ISEYA ROKUBE OFFICIALLY!
OIRAN, WHY DON'T YOU POUR SOME SAKE FOR TSUKIYA AS A BLESSING?
WHY ...!?
SHIVER
SHIVER
SAN GETSU

ANSWER ME, SANGET SU!
MASTER
That person is scary.
She keeps staring at me.

BLOW
WELL... WELL ISEYA-SAN,
HA HA HA
WHY! DON'T GIRLS HERE KNOW HOW TO PLEASE A GUEST?
CHE! YOU COULD LEARN A THING OR TWO FROM MY TSU KIYA.
OH, YES, WE NEED MORE SAKE.
NO..
THIS IS NOT SAN GETSU.

NOT
SAN
GET
SU
!

DEFINITELY
NOT SANGETSU !!
Whatever happens, I'll never change my heart
From you
Snatch
HEY !?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, USUGUMO ...?

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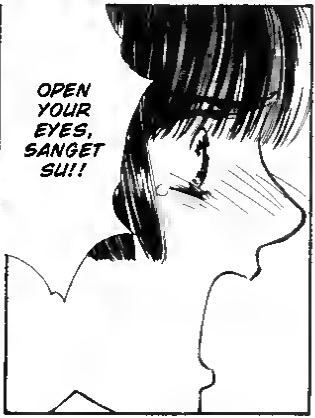

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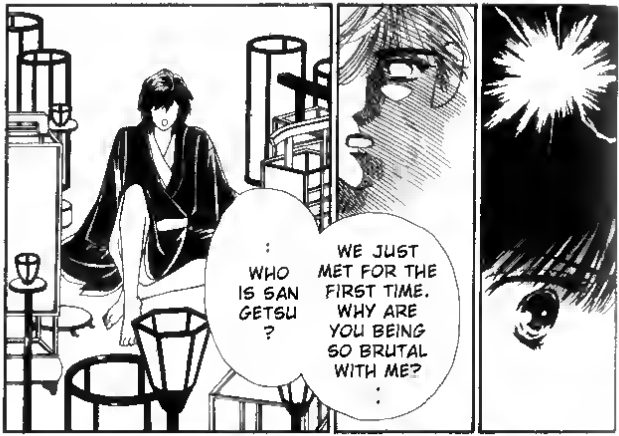

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DON'T LET ME BE MIS-ERA-BLE HERE A-LONE !!

SAN GETSU ...
IT DIDN'T WORK

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I USED TO RIDICULE YOU BUT DEEP DOWN INSIDE..
I GUESS I ENVY YOU.
ALL OF US SUZAKU-SAMA'S SUBORDI-NATES ARE PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES WERE NO BETTER THAN TRASH THROWN AWAY IN SEWAGE.
I WISH I COULD REKINDLE IT.
BUT IT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.
I JUST CAN'T ;
NO MAT-TER HOW MUCH I LOVE DOCTOR AOTO.. ;
OR EVEN THOUGH I CAN ES-CAPE THE CLAWS OF SUZAKU-SAMA.. ;
BUT IF IT IS YOU ⋮
MAY BE ⋮

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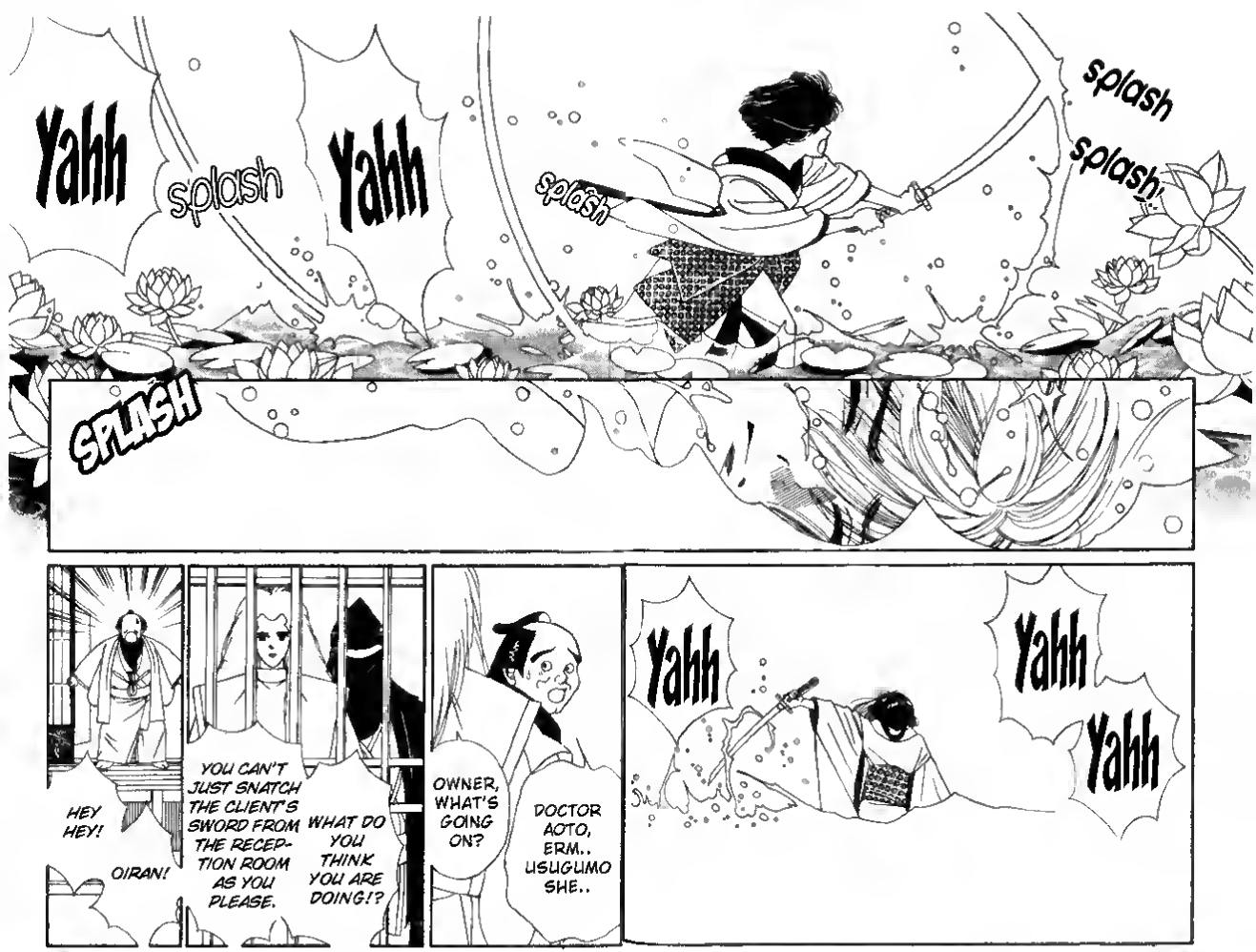
Yahhh
!!
splash



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LAST NIGHT ISEROKU-SAN RANSOMED TSUKIYA OF YOSHIMACHI AND BROUGHT HIM HERE. AFTER THE GUESTS WENT BACK
USUGUMO-CHAN HAS BEEN LIKE THIS EVER SINCE. SHE DOESN'T RESPOND TO ANYONE.
TSUKI YA!?
WHAT DO YOU WISH TO STRIKE AT?

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WITH THAT KIND OF SWING, YOU CAN'T EVEN HURT A LOTUS LEAF.
I DON'T MEAN TO CUT A LEAF
WHAT I WANT
WHAT I WANT TO STRIKE THROUGH
IS MY SELF.
MY WEAK HELPLESS SELF

AS A COURTE-SAN OF YOSHI WARA :
ALL I'M CAPABLE OF IS WATCHING PEOPLE DISTRAUGHT IN AGONY.. WATCHING THE COUNTRY SUF-FER IN THE RIOTS.
ALL I CAN DO
IS PRAY !!

SLIP
RESENT FUL !!
AAAH !
THAT'S WHY I FEEL SO ⋮
FLY
WATCH OUT!
SFX CLANK

CLATTER
CLATTER
SIGH
SHINK
AS YOU SAID, CUTTING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS IS NOT AN EASY TASK.
BUT IF YOU ALWAYS AIM AN EVER-SHARPEN BLADE FORTH OUT,
YOU CAN DEFINITELY STRIKE A WAY THROUGH IT.
DO YOU WANT ME TO TEACH YOU?

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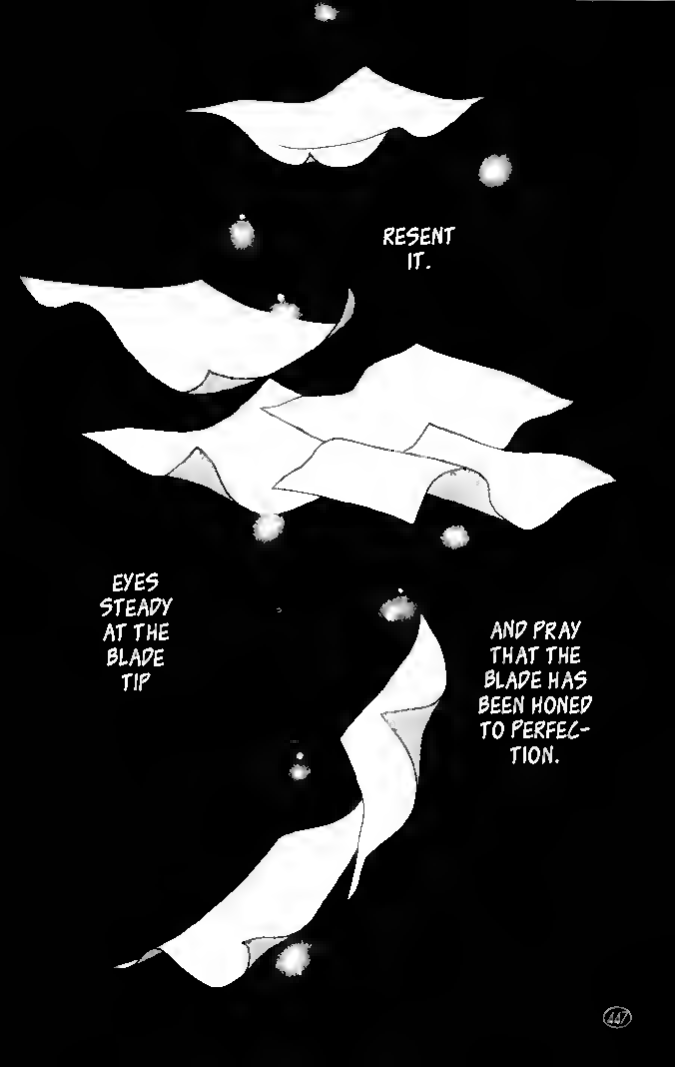
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HAVE AN OIRAN OF YOSHIWARA AS A PUPIL. AOTO!
YES.. SIR!
USUGUMO, THIS PERSON JUST OPENED UP A SWORD DOU-JOU* AT MY PLACE AT O-TAMAIKE..
HIS NAME IS. TOGA WA JUBEI.
USUGU MO-OIRAN.
SHINK
GIVE IT A TRY?
RESENT THE EVIL THAT PLAGUES THE COUN-TRY,
KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BLADE TIP
AND PRAY THAT THE BLADE HAS BEEN HONED TO PERFEC-TION

* Doujou = A training school for martial arts

HAVE A FAITH IN YOURSELF,
AND YOU WILL STRIKE IT THROUG
SFX THROW


RESENT IT.
EYES STEADY AT THE BLADE TIP
AND PRAY THAT THE BLADE HAS BEEN HONED TO PERFEC-TION.

Shink
I CAN ...
DO IT!

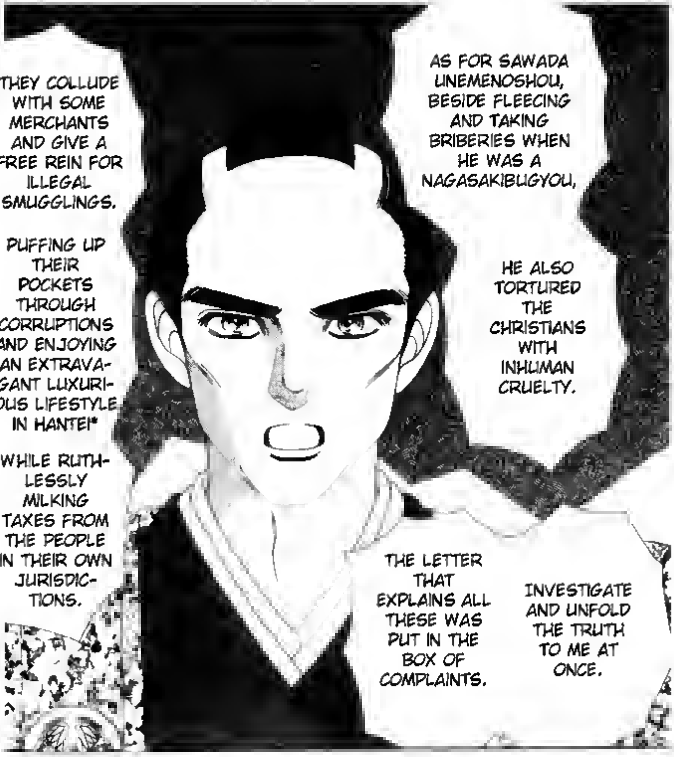
WHAT'S WRONG?

YOU WOKE UP SO EARLY, TSUKIYA.

I'M WATCHING THE SUNRISE, SIR.
IT'S CREEPING UP SO SLUGGISHLY.. AS IF IT'S IN AGONY.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. THE SUN RISES IN JOY AND DELIGHT.
HOW COULD IT BE IN AGONY.
BUT I'M IN AGONY, SIR.
TO GRACE ANOTHER NEW DAY WITH A FEELING
THAT I HAVE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING MOST IMPORTANT TO ME.

P..
PLEASE DON'T BE KIDDING, MY LORD!
YOU BLOCK-HEADS! WHO SAID I WAS KIDDING?
ALL THE DAIMYOS IN THE LIST HERE MUST BE EITHER EXILED OR KAIEKI*
AND O-MET-SUKE SAWADA UNEMENOSHOU IS TO BE HEIMON.
M..MY LORD IS THERE ANY PROOF..?
PROOF? OOH, I HAVE A LOT.

* Kaeki - A punishment to a samurai by forfeiting his land and pension, and also reduce to a commoner


AS FOR SAWADA UNEMENOSHOU, BESIDE FLEECING AND TAKING BRIBERIES WHEN HE WAS A NAGASAKIBUGYOU,
HE ALSO TORTURED THE CHRISTIANS WITH INHUMAN CRUELTY.
THEY COLLUDE WITH SOME MERCHANTS AND GIVE A FREE REIN FOR ILLEGAL SMUGGLINGS.
PUFFING UP THEIR POCKETS THROUGH CORRUPTIONS AND ENJOYING AN EXTRAVAGANT LUXURIOUS LIFESTYLE IN HANTEI*
WHILE RUTHLESSLY MILKING TAXES FROM THE PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN JURISDICTIONS.
THE LETTER THAT EXPLAINS ALL THESE WAS PUT IN THE BOX OF COMPLAINTS.
INVESTIGATE AND UNFOLD THE TRUTH TO ME AT ONCE.

* Hantei = Daimyos' manor in Edo

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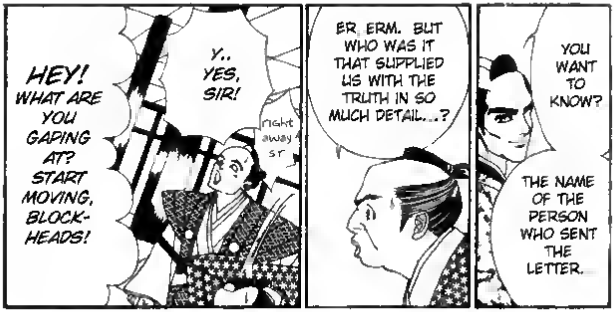

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU GAPING AT? START MOVING, BLOCK-HEADS!
Y.. YES, SIR!
right away sir
ER, ERM. BUT WHO WAS IT THAT SUPPLIED US WITH THE TRUTH IN SO MUCH DETAIL...?
YOU WANT TO KNOW?
THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO SENT THE LETTER.

IT WAS WRITTEN IN AN OB-SCENELY LARGE PRINT..
THE GOLDEN-HAIRED PHANTOM.. OR THE HEAD OF KIKU-GANG, THE GREAT-EST THIEF OF ALL..
BENTEN KOSO KIKUNO SUKE.

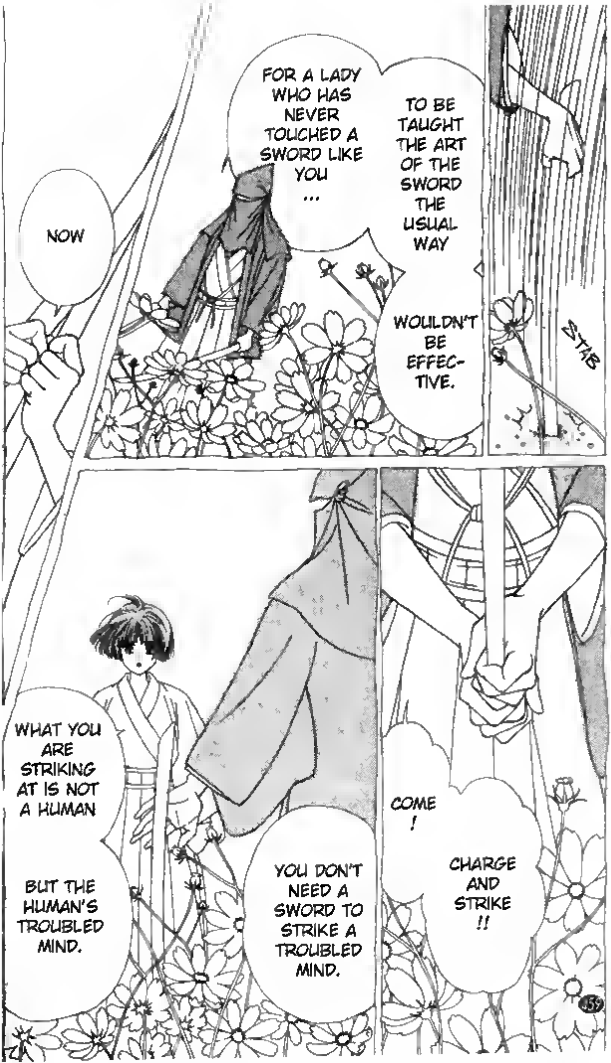
WHAT DID YOU SAY !?
SORRY BUT UNEMENO SHO-SAN MUST HAVE KNOWN THE CONSE-QUENCES.
R.. ROU-JUU-SAMA! !
SIR.. !!
slam
I SUG-GEST THAT YOU ENDURE IT UNTIL YOU GET AN AM-NESTY.
"Heimon" was a punish-ment by barring the doors and windows of the property from the outside.
GAHH ..!
which practi-cally marked the end of that person's political s life.
SUZAKU! SUZAKU! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING!?
BRING ME THE SHOGUN'S HEAD.. BRING ME USUGUMO-DONO'S HEAD TO ME IMMEDIATE-LY!!
55

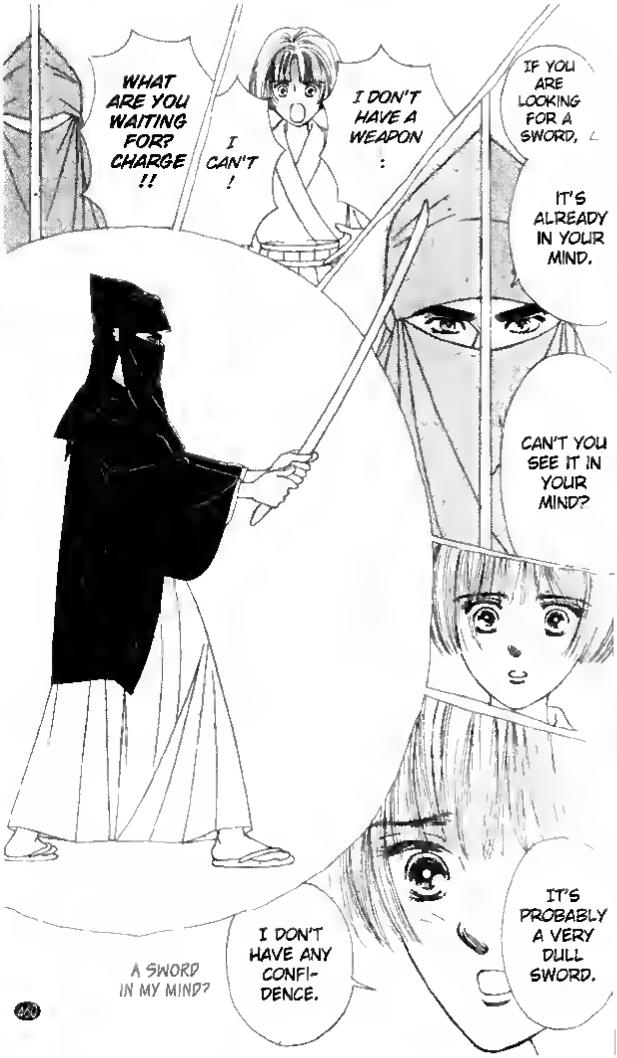
GO
GA
WA
KO
BU
KAN
DOU
JOU

SHE'S BEEN TRAINING FOR 2 MONTHS
BUT HIS LORDSHIP HAS NOT ONCE ALLOWED USUGUMO TO HOLD A SWORD

JUST STANDING 2 KEN APART
HOLDING STILL, WATCHING EACH OTHER IN SILENCE
NOT A SINGLE MOVEMENT
WHAT KIND OF SWORD MOVEMENT
IS THE SHOGUN TEACHING USUGUMO?
458

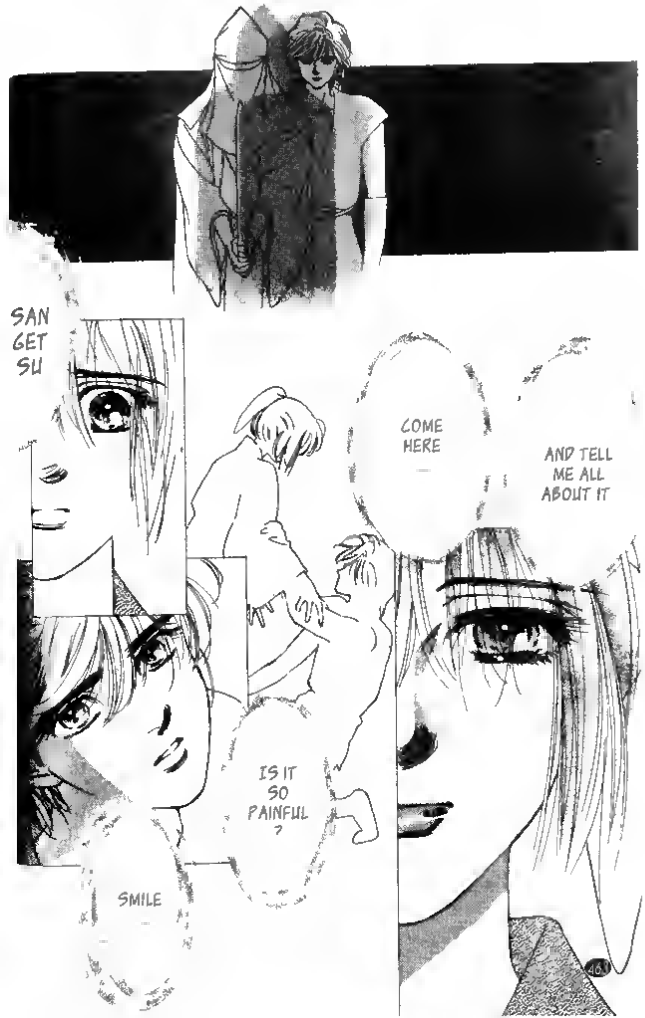
(*2 ken = about 4 yards or 0.9m)


FOR A LADY WHO HAS NEVER TOUCHED A SWORD LIKE YOU ...
TO BE TAUGHT THE ART OF THE SWORD THE USUAL WAY
NOW
WOULDN'T BE EFFEC-TIVE.
STAB
COME !
CHARGE AND STRIKE !!
YOU DON'T NEED A SWORD TO STRIKE A TROUBLED MIND.
WHAT YOU ARE STRIKING AT IS NOT A HUMAN
BUT THE HUMAN'S TROUBLED MIND.


WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? CHARGE !!
I CAN'T !
I DON'T HAVE A WEAPON :
IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A SWORD,
IT'S ALREADY IN YOUR MIND.
CAN'T YOU SEE IT IN YOUR MIND?
A SWORD IN MY MIND?
I DON'T HAVE ANY CONFI-DENCE.
IT'S PROBABLY A VERY DULL SWORD.

NOT AT ALL.
THE SWORD IN YOSHIWARA'S NO.1 OIRAN'S MIND CAN NEVER BE DULL.
RIGHT ?
I'M NOT SURE IF I CAN STRIKE WITH IT.
BUT THE DESPERATION AND SADNESS IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS, I CAN SEE THEM BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.
THINKING ABOUT IT,
THAT'S ALL I'M CAPABLE OF.

THE FIRST MEETING BETWEEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER TURNED OUT TO BE A CONFRONTATION
WITHOUT A PROPER INTRODUCTION,
THE SHOGUN ASKED USUGUMO TO STRIKE CHAOS IN THE OPPONENT'S MIND
DOES THE SHOGUN WANT USUGUMO TO CUT?
WHAT EXACTLY
AND USUGUMO, STANDING BEFORE HER FATHER,
WHAT IS SHE THINKING, WHAT IS SHE AIMING AT?


SAN
GET
SU
COME HERE
AND TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT
IS IT SO PAINFUL ?
SMILE

COME
!
SFX STRIKE
SFX FLASH
464

STOP
WELL DONE, :
VERY ...
USUI GUMO.

Tremble
Tremble
Tremble
Tremble
T……
TOGAWA-SENSEI,
IT WAS IN A BLINK OF AN EYE,
I DON'T KNOW HOW I DID IT.
……
THAT'S FINE.
HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HIDE THE SADNESS AND CHAOS IN HIS MIND,
AND COULDN'T HELP BUT LEAVE AN OPENING FOR YOU TO STRIKE.
WHEN HE IS STANDING HERE BEFORE YOUR EYES,
EVEN AN EXPERI-ENCED SWORD-MASTER,

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DEFEATING THE ENEMY WITH THE ENEMY'S WEAPON BY TAKING ADVANTAGE WHEN HIS BREATHING RHYTHM IS DISRUPTED LEAVING AN OPENING IN HIS STANCE...
I SEE THAT'S A PERFECT ART OF SWORDSMANSHIP BEFITTING A BLADE-LESS COURTESAN LIKE USUGUMO.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, ...
...FATHER

I JUST SAID THAT
BECAUSE FROM WHAT I HEARD, FATHER AND TOGAWA-SENSEI'S AGE IS PROBABLY PRETTY MUCH THE SAME.
SOMETIMES I FELT THAT FATHER HIMSELF WAS TEACHING ME.
MY REAL FATHER IS SOMEONE SO FARAWAY FROM ME. HE SEEMS INCREDIBLY OUT OF REACH JUST AS THE MOON IN THE 13TH NIGHT OF THE WANING PHASE LIKE TONIGHT.
WITH THE LOVE FOR FATHER AND SANGETSU
MAY I CALL THIS MOVEMENT OF THE SWORD "REFLECTING CRESCENT"?
I FINALLY FOUND THE SHOGUN'S SECRET DAUGHTER, USUGUMO-DONO!
SURRENDER YOUR LIFE TO ME!!

YUMP
ゴロ
SFX THUNK
USUGUMO! THAT'S GOKU, ONE OF THE FOUR IGA ASSASINS!
KU KU...
KASHIN IS ALWAYS A COWARD.
SANGESTU IS NO BETTER THAN DEAD.
NOW THE PRINCESS'S HEAD BELONGS TO ME!!

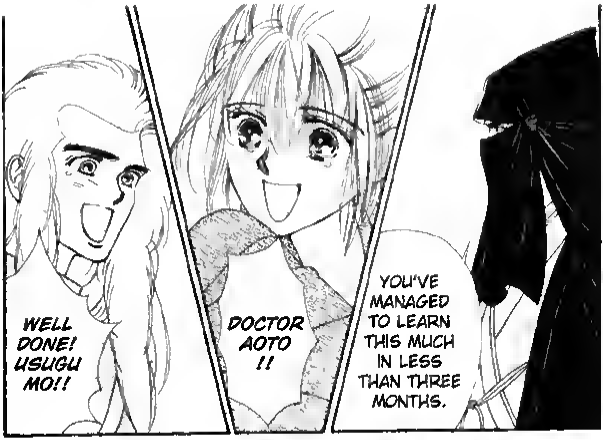
YAHH !!
IN ORDER TO FREE YOUR HEART SOME-DAY
SAN GET SU!!
TO UN-SHACKL E THE CHAINS THAT BOND YOU
I'LL STRIKE !!

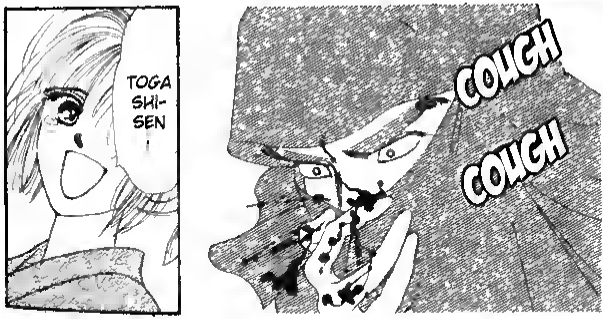
Winkkk
UGH !!
WHA
WHAT !!?
MY LEGS
ARE MOVING ON THEIR OWN!
SLASH

AHH
THUD

NOTHING
TO WORRY ABOUT
THIS IS THE SECRET TECHNIQUE
THE REFLECTING CRESCENT!

THE
REFLECTING
CRESCENT
II


WELL DONE! USUGU MO!!
DOCTOR AOTO !!
YOU'VE MANAGED TO LEARN THIS MUCH IN LESS THAN THREE MONTHS.


TOGA SHI-SEN !
COUGH
COUGH

COUGH
TOGASHI-SENSEI !!
COUGH
RUSH
RUSH
My lord !
I'M FINE
THE MORE IMPORTANT THING IS ... AOTO...
BRING ... BRING ME THAT SWORD.
LOOKS LIKE THE DAY I SHOULD GIVE IT TO USUGUMO HAS COME ...

I SUMMONED YOU HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORY COME CLOSER
GIRL, YOU NEED NOT TO FEAR ME.
I HEARD THAT A HIGHBORN HAS NO FEELINGS.
A HIGH LORD LIKE YOU, WOULD NEVER UNDERSTAND THE WORDS COMING FROM THE PEOPLE UNDER TYRANNY LIKE US.
IF I DON'T DRAW SOME BLOOD, A SAMURAI LIKE YOU WON'T TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.
LET ME DO IT !
WHAT ARE YOU DOING !?

SO PLEASE LET MY BLOOD
BUY YOU SOME SYMPATHY FOR US, THE CHRISTIAN COURTESANS, PLEASE!
TAKE THIS SWORD, LISUGUMO.
A- A WORD LIKE THIS, must cost a fortune!
BUT IT MUST BE SOME-THING IMPOR-TANT TO YOU.
IT DOESN'T MATTER,
LISUGUMO
3

WOULD YOU
HOLD ME WITH THOSE ARMS OF YOURS JUST ONCE?
HUG

THE BLOOD WILL SMEAR OVER YOU.
PLEASE.. IT'S NOTHING.
OH, SENSEI ...

SENSEI
SENSEI
MAY-
BE
ARE
YOU
ACTUALLY
NNHH!

UGHH
UGHH
?
MY OWN ROOM ?
EVEN MY HAIR
USU GUMO !!
USU GUMO-CHAN !! LISTEN UP !!
SFX TAO TAO TAO

KOZOME-SAN!
ARE YOU SLEEP-TAKING? DOCTOR AOTO BROUGHT YOU BACK IN A PALANQUIN
HOW DID I
COME BACK HERE!!?
BUT LISTEN!
TSUKIYA-SAN, WHO WAS RECENTLY BOUGHT BY ISEROKU
HE STABBED HIS MASTER AND RAN AWAY!!

EH!?
Oh my goodness!
I have to tell everyone.
I CAN'T BELIEVE TSUKIYA-SAN IS CAPABLE OF MURDERING.
A BIG FAN LIKE ME IS IN A STATE OF SHOCK!
SAG

SAN GETSU !!
I DON'T UNDER-STAND ...
WHY ...
AM I HERE ...
TO SEE YOU ...?

WHY DID YOU KILL ISEROKU-SAN !?
THAT UGLY TOAD KEPT BABBLING ⋮
THAT HE WILL RANSOM OFF USUGUMO OF MIURA.
IN FRONT OF THE GUESTS ⋮
AND MAKE HER AND TSUKIYA DANCE NAKED.
IF THAT DOESN'T WORK, HE WILL JUST SEIZE HER BY FORCE
THE NEXT THING I KNEW ISEROKU WAS LYING IN THE POOL OF BLOOD.

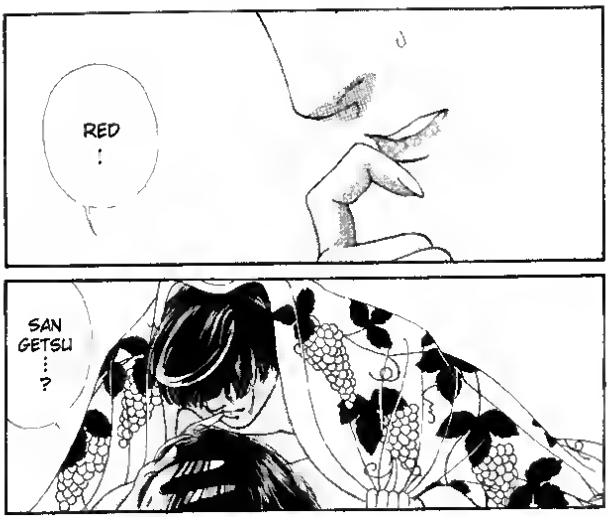
WHY
DID THAT ANGER ME SO MUCH ?
GET YOU OUT OF MY MIND ⋮ ?
WHY CAN'T I
IT IS LIKE YOU ARE THE WOMAN THAT I HAVE BEEN CHERISHING FOREVER.
SAN GETSU

SAN GETSU II
EACH DAY
I FEEL LIKE I AM ALREADY DEAD.
ONLY WHEN
I CALL OUT YOUR NAME
HOLD ME, SANGETSU.
ONLY WHEN I PICTURE YOUR FACE
THE FIRE DEEP INSIDE ME FLICKERS AS IF IT COULD FLARE UP AGAIN.

FEEL ME WITH YOUR ⋮
EARS
FINGERS
HANDS
LIPS
SCENT
LET ALL OF YOUR SENSES WAKE UP THE MEMORY OF ME ONCE MORE.
SEIZE IT BACK TO YOUR HEART ⋮

SAY THAT AGAIN, KASHIN.
I SAID ERASING SANGETSU'S MEMORY IS A LITTLE BIT TOO EXTREME, SIR.
IF YOU SEE HIM AS INCOMPENT
WHY DON'T YOU JUST SEND HIM BACK TO HIS VILLAGE?
IF THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH
WHEN YOU ERASED HIS MEMORY, YOU COULD HAVE MADE HIM FORGET ABOUT HIS LIFE AS A KAGEMA AS WELL.
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BEING INCOMPETENT?

EH ⋮ !?
ESPECIALLY WHEN COMPARED TO SOMEONE WHO FELL FOR AOTO TOJIRO INSTEAD OF THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
EVEN NOW, SANGETSU IS STILL AN EXCELLENT WARRIOR
HE'S THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE THAT I'M SAVING FOR THE END.
SANGETSU IS MY BEST BET.
HE'S A TIME BOMB
THAT I'VE BEEN SAVING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT.
SUZAKU-SAMA ⋮ !?
DEAR KASHIN, YOU AND THE WORLD IS ABOUT TO WITNESS THE MOST ENTERTAINING SHOW ON EARTH.
HA HA HA HA !



WHEN I THINK I'M THIS CLOSE TO YOU, I CAN'T HOLD BACK MY TEARS.

WHO ARE YOU

TO ME ?

WHOSE BODY IS TREMBLING?
WHOSE EYES ARE CRYING?
SAN GETSU?
OR ME?
I AM SAN GETSU, SAN GETSU IS ME?

SANGETSU IS ONE OF THE FOUR IGA TIGERS WHO HAVE ENDURED LONG COUNTLESS GRUELING TRAININGS
HIS POWERFUL MIND MAY BREAK MY HYPNOSIS AND BRING BACK THE MEMORY.
HOWEVER ⋮ FU FU FU
THE REAL DEAL BEGINS AFTER THAT.
HE WILL RAISE THE BLADE
AFTER SANGETSU BREAKS MY SPELL,
DURING THE MOST CRUCIAL MOMENT
AND SLAY HIS PRECIOUS TREASURE LIKE A PIECE OF TRASH
WITH HIS OWN HANDS !

IF I CONTINUE
MY MEMORY WILL COME BACK.
SAN GETSU ?
I'M AFRAID.
NO : !!
I'M AFRAID I WILL REMEMBER IT !
IF I DO, I'LL BE ALONE AGAIN.
SAN GETSU ?
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY MAKE YOU THINK THAT?

YOU'LL NEVER BE ALONE ANYMORE.
WHEN YOU GET YOUR MEMORY BACK, I'LL BE BESIDE YOU FOREVER.
WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER, NEVER ALONE.
SAY IT.
SAY 'USU GUMO'
EVEN MY NAME
BELONGS TO YOU
⋮

HIS KILLING INSTINCT WILL BE ALERT.
AND WHEN HE SAYS THE KEYWORD, THE ONE I SET UPON WHEN MESSING WITH HIS MEMORY,
AND SAY IT OUT LOUD!!
AWAKEN THE HEART SO MADLY IN LOVE WITH USUGUMO
COME. SAN GETSU
USU GUMO.

USU GUMO.
YOU REMEMBER ?
USU GUMO.
USU GUMO !
MY USU GUMO !
SAN GETSU !!

JUST SAY
"I LOVE YOU".
I LOVE YOU USU-GUMO !!
I LOVE YOU . !!

ドン
ドン

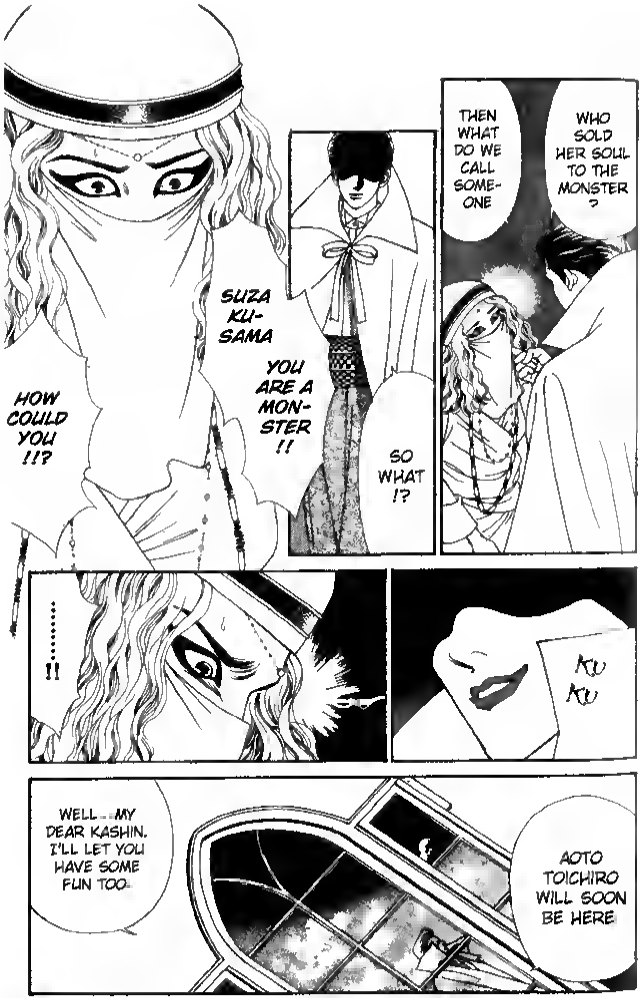
Kill

Kill Her

SANGETSU ... !!
WE'LL
NEVER BE APART EVER AGAIN.

SFX HEART POUNDING
ตึก
ตึก

KILL
KILL USUGUMO
KILL HER...!


WHO SOLD HER SOUL TO THE MONSTER ?
THEN WHAT DO WE CALL SOME-ONE
SUZA KU-SAMA
YOU ARE A MON-STER !!
SO WHAT !?
HOW COULD YOU !!?
KU KU
.....!!
AOTO TOICHIRO WILL SOON BE HERE
WELL... MY DEAR KASHIN. I'LL LET YOU HAVE SOME FUN TOO.

EH !?
I SENT HIM A NOTE TO LURE HIM OUT.
ONE MISTAKE
AND YOU'LL KNOW WHAT WILL BECOME OF YOU, KASHIN.

I HAD NO IDEA THERE WAS A WESTERN BUILDING OUTSIDE THE CITY.
clack
OPEN
THIS SCENT!
I have a matter to discuss with you outside Yoshiwara

TAKAO, ARE YOU HERE?
ARE YOU UP-STAIRS?

TAKAO.
WHY :
DID YOU COME, DOC-TOR?
USUGUMO
IS GOING TO DIE BY THE HANDS OF SANGETSU.
A MATTER TO BE DIS-CUSSED OUTSIDE YOSHI-WARA
MUST BE VERY IMPOR-TANT, ISN'T THAT SO?
AND I HAVE TO KILL DOC-TOR WITH MY OWN HANDS.
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO COME?

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SFX-TEAM

Kill!
AH…
AH…
ARGHHH!!
SFX CUT
SAN GETSU!?

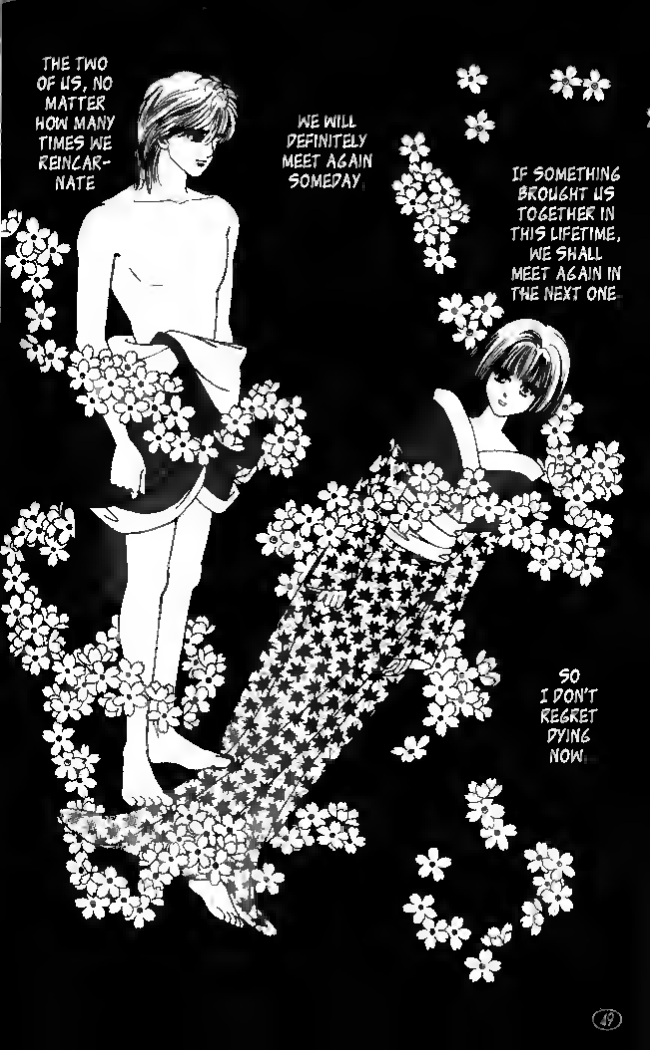
Kill!
NO!
I'LL PROTECT USUGUMO !!
SAN GETSU !!
BACK AWAY, USU GUMO !!
ぱぁぁ
SPARKS!

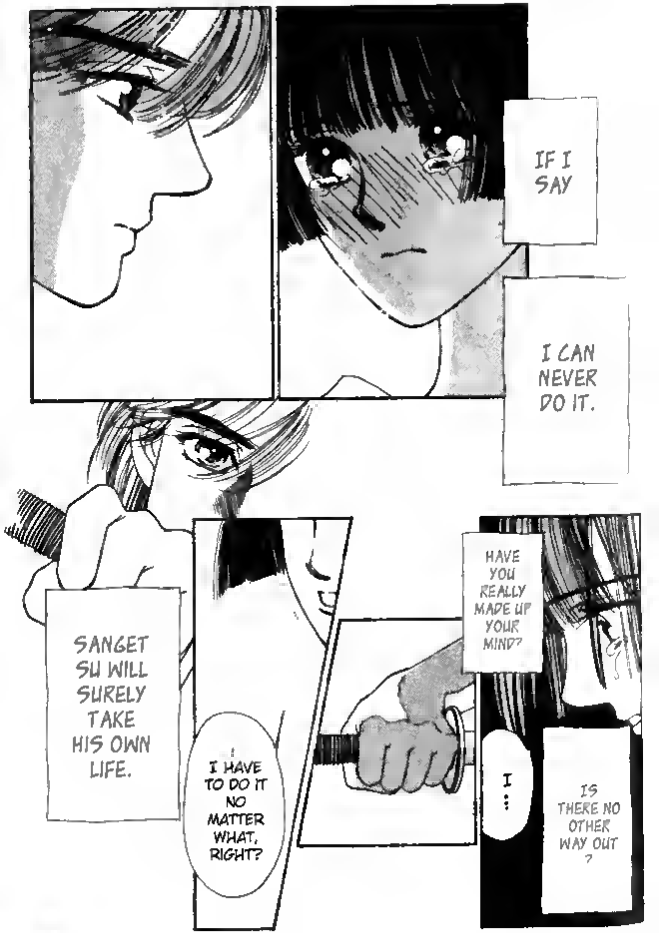
KYAAAA
SFX CHOP
SFX CLATTER, DRIP DRIP
DON'T TOUCH ME!
USU GUMO,
PICK UP THE SWORD.
AND KILL ME !!

DO IT !!
I WAS GOING TO USE THESE HANDS ⋮
JUST A MINUTE AGO,
I WAS UNDER SUZAKU-SAMA'S SPELL ⋮
EH ⋮ !?
YOU CANNOT TRUST ME !!
BUT ⋮ YOU AL-READY BROKE THE SPELL.
AND THE WOUND IS NOT THAT SERI-OUS.
I JUST DESTROYED SUZAKU-SAMA'S ELECTRICAL TRANSMIT-TER.
⋮ THAT IS AN ARTIFI-CIAL FINGER ⋮

FAILURE OR BETRAYAL INCURS DEATH PENALTY.
IT'S THE RULE FOR US PEOPLE OF THE DARK.
BUT
EVEN FOR A SHORT MOMENT, AS PROOF OF MY TRUE LOVE FOR A PERSON OF THE LIGHT WORLD.
THIS IS MY LAST WISH.
USUGUMO,
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF IT.

TAKE CARE OF MY FAILURE AND MY LIFE WITH YOUR OWN HANDS.


THE TWO OF US, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES WE REINCAR-NATE
WE WILL DEFINITELY MEET AGAIN SOMEDAY
IF SOMETHING BROUGHT US TOGETHER IN THIS LIFETIME, WE SHALL MEET AGAIN IN THE NEXT ONE
SO I DON'T REGRET DYING NOW


IF I SAY
I CAN NEVER DO IT.
SANGET SU WILL SURELY TAKE HIS OWN LIFE.
I HAVE TO DO IT NO MATTER WHAT, RIGHT?
HAVE YOU REALLY MADE UP YOUR MIND?
I...
IS THERE NO OTHER WAY OUT?

...UNDER STAND.
I'LL
STRIKE YOU WITH THIS SWORD.
I WILL DES- TROY
YOUR MISERIES
AND EVERY- THING ELSE

FAREWELL
SANGETSU, PREPARE YOURSELF !!
SANGETSU

SFX-cut
Fall

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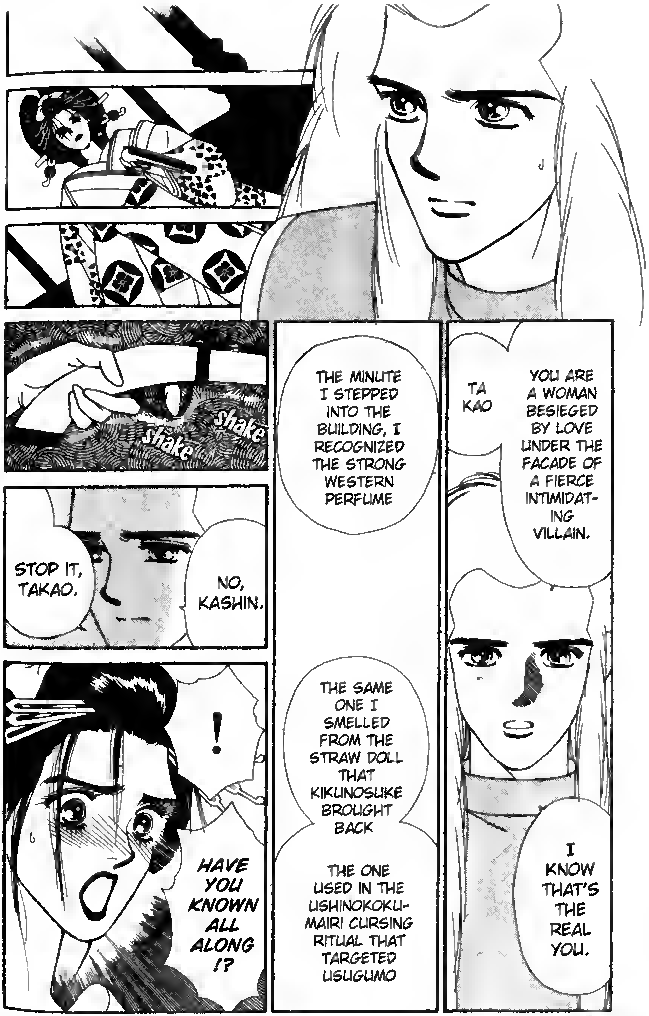
THE SANGETSU THAT WAS UNDER SUZAKU'S COMMAND
IS NO LONGER HERE
OR ANYWHERE ELSE !!
SANGETSU IS ALREADY DEAD !!

ERM
...
ALLOW ME TO INTRO-DUCE MYSELF.
I'M THE OIRAN OF MIURA'S AT YOSHIWARA
NAMED USUGUMO.
OH MY! AREN'T YOU A CUTE ONE!
...I THINK I AM FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU...

USU GUMO.
IN THE ENCHANTED LAND THAT BELONGS TO JUST THE TWO OF US
WE WILL BE TOGETHER.
JUST THE TWO OF US.


TA KAO
YOU ARE A WOMAN BESIEGED BY LOVE UNDER THE FACADE OF A FIERCE INTIMIDATING VILLAIN.
I KNOW THAT'S THE REAL YOU.
THE MINUTE I STEPPED INTO THE BUILDING, I RECOGNIZED THE STRONG WESTERN PERFUME
THE SAME ONE I SMELLED FROM THE STRAW DOLL THAT KIKUNOSUKE BROUGHT BACK
THE ONE USED IN THE USHINOKOKU-MAIRI CURSING RITUAL THAT TARGETED USUGUMO
Shake
Shake
STOP IT, TAKAO.
NO, KASHIN.
!
HAVE YOU KNOWN ALL ALONG !?

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NO MORE, DOCTOR !!

BANG BANG
SFX BANG BANG
SHATTER
SFX SHATTER

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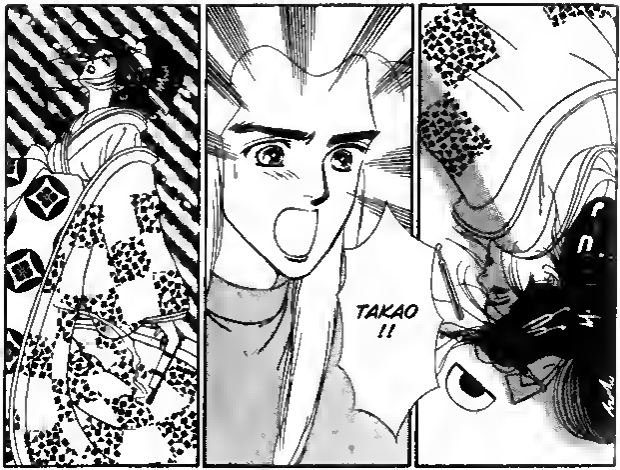

SFX OPEN
HEY, I'M HOME
WELCOME BACK.
THE SOUP IS DONE.
HO! LOOKS TASTY.
WELL HONEY ...
I KEPT IT SIMMERED SINCE AFTER-NOON.
I FIGURED YOU MUST BE HUNGRY.
simmer
simmer simmer

Hmm
Blush
YOU CALLED ME "HONEY".
AH! IT JUST CAME OUT!
YOU USED TO BLUSH LIKE MAD EVERY TIME YOU SAID IT.
I'M EMBARRASSED!
BUT I'VE BEEN PRACTICING, YOU KNOW!
FINALLY! FINALLY! YOU CALLED ME LIKE I'M YOUR REAL HUSBAND!
Yeah!
WOULD YOU DROP IT ALREADY? STOP TEASING ME.

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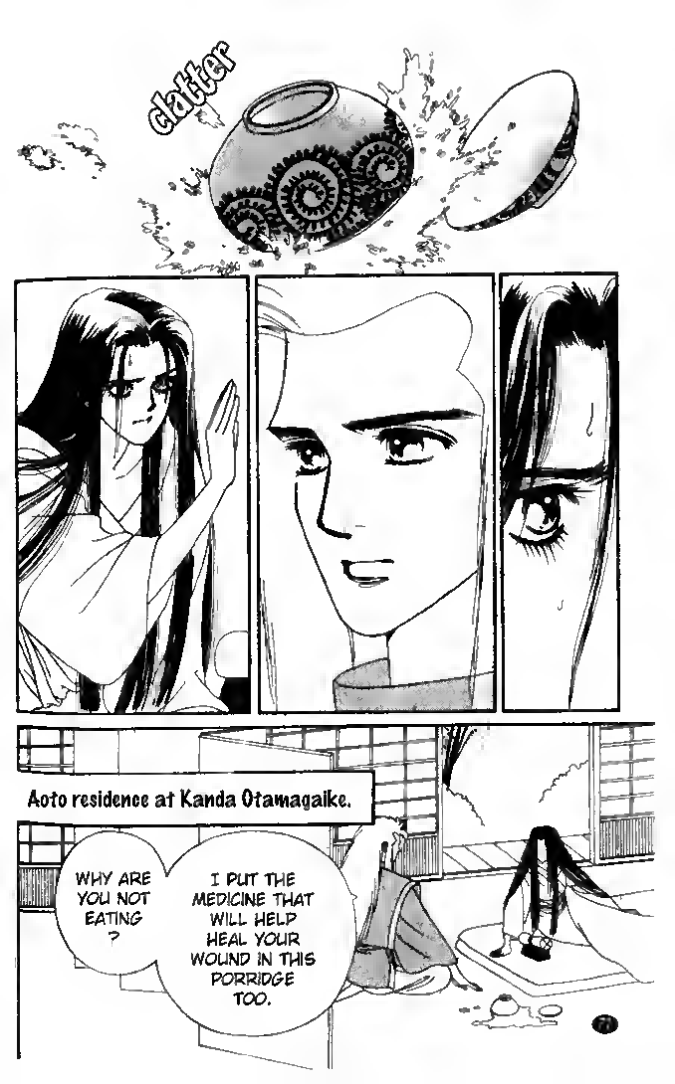
IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD
YOU SHOULD NOT BE EMBARRASSED AT ALL.
WE HAVE TO CONVINCE PEOPLE THAT WE ARE AN ORDINARY COUPLE.
WE FLED FROM EDO TO LIVE IN A RURAL VILLAGE SEVERAL RI* FROM THE CITY
SO THAT WE CAN SPEND OUR LIVES ALONE TOGETHER
AND FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE.
(*1 ri = 3.927km or 2.44 miles)
ALONE TOGETHER
AS HUSBAND AND WIFE
WHAT ?
HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ?
clatter
NO !!

THE DAY SANGETSU'S MEMORY RETURNED,
AT NIGHTFALL, WE SNEAKED OUT OF EDO AND LEFT EVERYTHING BEHIND
SINCE THEN, SANGETSU HAS NEVER TRIED TO TOUCH ME IN ANYWAY.
ONLY ONCE DURING THE JOURNEY.
HE SOFTLY RUBBED THE SORE MUSCLES FOR ME UNTIL THE WEE HOURS.

BUT I STILL FEEL
THAT HE HAS BEEN EMBRAC-ING ME ALL ALONG
WITH EYES AS WARM AS SUNSHINE IN SPRING INSTEAD OF HARD METALLIC ARMS
WROUGHT AS A TOOL OF AN IGA ASSASSIN
I CAN FEEL IT
WITH AN INTENSITY LIKE NEVER BEFORE
...

THE TENDERNESS SO OVERWHELMING THAT ALL I CAN DO IS AVERT MY EYES
I HAVE NOTHING TO REGRET ..... !!
AH HE'S STARING AT ME AGAIN
BUT
I CAN'T LET THE WEIGHT OF HAPPINESS RUIN IT
I'VE NEVER FELT SORRY FOR ONE SECOND.
.....
TOMORROW, WHY DON'T YOU COME AND HELP ME AT THE SOBA STALL?

YOU KNOW... COUPLE'S SOBA.
SURE.


clatter
Aoto residence at Kanda Otamagaike.
WHY ARE YOU NOT EATING ?
I PUT THE MEDICINE THAT WILL HELP HEAL YOUR WOUND IN THIS PORRIDGE TOO.

WHAT ARE YOU HELPING ME FOR ?
AND WHY ARE YOU KEEPING A WOMAN PESTERING YOU FOR LOVE BY YOUR SIDE
WHILE YOUR HEART IS NOT FREE ANYMORE?
clack
PLEASE EAT IT, TAKA..
I BEG YOU, PLEASE EAT SOMETHING.
IT'S KASHIN OF IGA !
I'LL PROBABLY TAKE YOUR LIFE ONCE I'VE RECOVERED !!
ARE YOU HELPING THIS KIND OF WOMAN !!?

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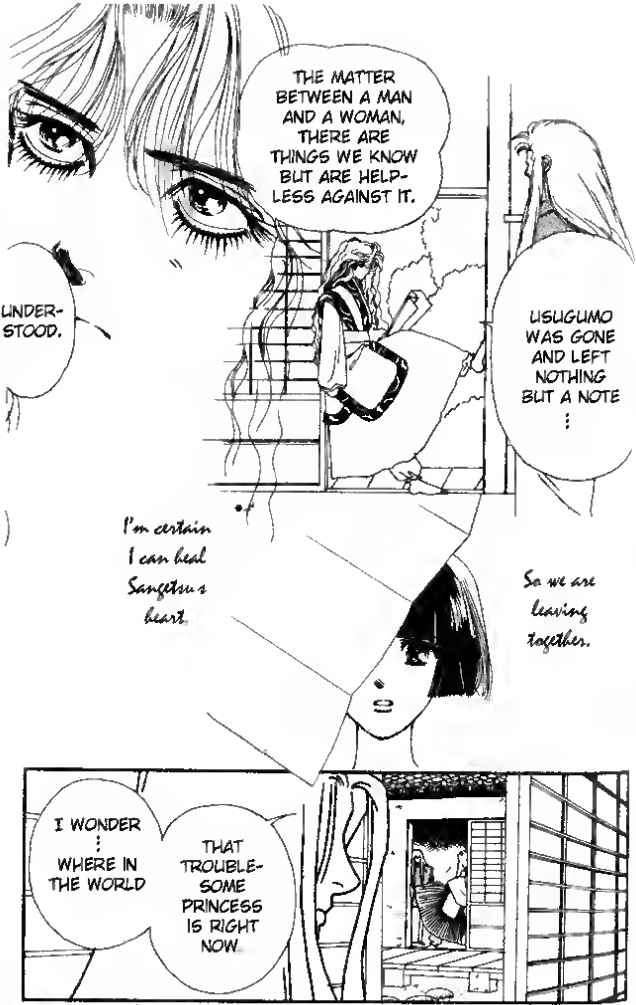
SFX. SLIDE
BANG
NOT GOOD.
HOW WAS IT?
DOC-TOR,
YOU'RE GOING TO SAVE HER LIFE NO MATTER WHAT, AREN'T YOU?
SUZAKU'S BULLET WAS TIPPED WITH DEADLY POISON.
MOST OF THE POISON HAD SPREAD ALL OVER THE BODY.
IT MISSED THE VITAL ORGANS BUT BY THE TIME WE REMOVED IT,
71

SHE WAS THE ONE WHO DISGUISED HERSELF UNDER THE COVER OF TAKAO-DAYUU WITH THE ONLY PURPOSE OF TAKING USUGUMO'S LIFE.
HA HA
THIS IS NOTHING NEW.
BUT DOCTOR, IF YOU LET PASSION CLOUD YOUR JUDGMENT,
SOONER OR LATER A DISASTER IS BOUND TO CATCH YOU COMPLETELY OFF-GUARD.
KIKU-NOSUKE !!
... SHE IS JUST A WOMAN MADLY IN LOVE WITH ME
I LOVE HER, AL-RIGHT?
ABOUT TAKAO... PLEASE MAKE IT LOOK LIKE...


THE MATTER BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN, THERE ARE THINGS WE KNOW BUT ARE HELPLESS AGAINST IT.
UNDERSTOOD.
USUGUMO WAS GONE AND LEFT NOTHING BUT A NOTE ⋮
I'm certain I can heal Sangetsu's heart.
So we are leaving together.
I WONDER ⋮ WHERE IN THE WORLD
THAT TROUBLESOME PRINCESS IS RIGHT NOW.

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DOCTOR
I WON'T DIE YET
SUZAKU-SAMA CAN'T DIE BY SUCH A PUNY ATTACK.
SUZAKU-SAMA IS STILL ALIVE.
AND SOMEDAY, HE WILL CERTAINLY BE BACK BEFORE OUR EYES.
SO
HE SHOULD HAVE FALLEN INTO THE RIVER NEAR THE BUILDING BUT HIS BODY WASN'T FOUND.
THIS IS THE PROOF.
I CANNOT DIE BEFORE THAT MOMENT COMES.

IRAS-SHAI-MASE!
HAJIBE AND OYAE'S ISAYOI SOBA!
HOT SWEET-SCENTED BROTH AND SOBA AS WHITE AS CREAMY SKIN OF A YOUNG LADY*.
THE AUTHENTIC COUPLE'S SOBA.
PLEASE TRY A BOWL OF OUR FRESH HOT SOBA.

IS THAT GIRL OYAE-CHAN, THE WIFE OF ISAYOI SOBA'S OWNER?
HER BEAUTY IS THE TALK OF THE TOWN.
EVEN THE FAMOUS USUGUMO-OIRAN OF YOSHIWARA IN EDO
CANNOT BE COMPARED TO OYAE-CHAN.
I ENVY THAT ISAYOI SOBA'S OWNER SO.
AND HAJIBE-SAN, THE OWNER HIMSELF, IS AS HANDSOME AS A KABUKI ACTOR.

SIR.
PLEASE COME IN.
ONE SOBA PLEASE.
Gouhei-san gave me freebies again.
Cheater. You already have a husband.

SIR, PLEASE EXCUSE MY ILL-MANNERED WIFE.
SAY IT!
UH-UHH
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T ...
OFFER A PROPER GREETING.
DUMMY! WE HAVE A CUSTOMER HERE. WHERE IS THE PROPER GREETING?
LOTS OF FREEBIES TODAY.
Kluk Kluk
HONEY, I'M BACK.

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(*Nee-chan = big sister)

WHY……?
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE VEGETABLES.
USUGUMO,
HE MUST BE AN OLD FRIEND YOU HAVEN'T SEEN FOR A LONG TIME.
I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO TO CATCH UP.
SANGETSU……

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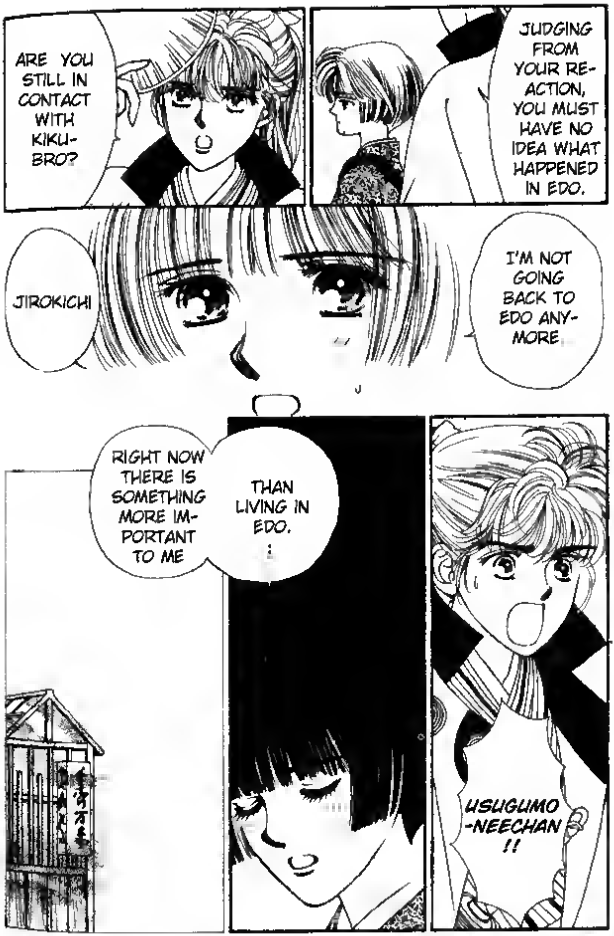
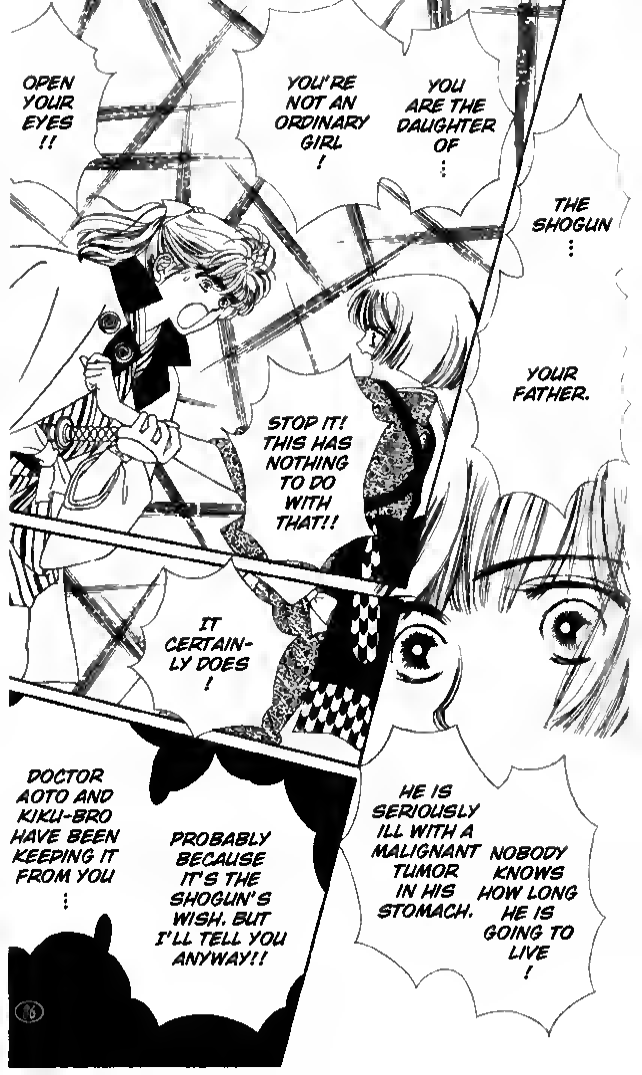
JIROKICHI YOU ARE TRAVEL-ING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY
TO RECRUIT HALF BLOOD CHILDREN FOR YOUR TRIP TO THEIR FATHERS' LAND, RIGHT?
HOW IS EVERY-THING SO FAR?
YOU SURE HAVE GROWN I HARDLY RECOGNIZED YOU.
YOU ARE LIVING IN THE WILD WITH THAT MAN?


ARE YOU STILL IN CONTACT WITH KIKU-BRO?
JUDGING FROM YOUR RE-ACTION, YOU MUST HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED IN EDO.
JIROKICHI
I'M NOT GOING BACK TO EDO ANY-MORE.
RIGHT NOW THERE IS SOMETHING MORE IM-PORTANT TO ME
THAN LIVING IN EDO.
USUGUMO -NEECHAN !!


OPEN YOUR EYES !!
YOU'RE NOT AN ORDINARY GIRL !
YOU ARE THE DAUGHTER OF ⋮
THE SHOGUN ⋮
YOUR FATHER.
STOP IT! THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT!!
IT CERTAIN-LY DOES !
DOCTOR AOTO AND KIKU-BRO HAVE BEEN KEEPING IT FROM YOU ⋮
PROBABLY BECAUSE IT'S THE SHOGUN'S WISH. BUT I'LL TELL YOU ANYWAY!!
HE IS SERIOUSLY ILL WITH A MALIGNANT TUMOR IN HIS STOMACH.
NOBODY KNOWS HOW LONG HE IS GOING TO LIVE !

YOU...
YOU'RE LYING.
HE SECRETLY ESCAPED FROM THE CASTLE TO DOCTOR AOTO'S HOUSE FOR PRIVATE TREATMENT
WHILE KIKI-BRO DISGUISED HIMSELF AND TOOK THE SHOGUN'S PLACE IN EDO CASTLE.
NO ONE KNOWS HE IS THE FAKE SHOGUN YET.
BUT THE CASTLE'S DOCTORS WHO SIDE WITH SAWADA, THE EX-O-METSUKE, ARE SPREADING THE WORDS THAT THE SHOGUN IS PROBABLY ILL.
USUGUMO
I WONDER HOW LONG KIKU-GANG'S SCHEME
IS GOING TO LAST.

DO YOU REALIZE !!?
IF
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO THE SHOGUN
THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN SAVE EDO, SAVE THIS COUNTRY
IS NO ONE ELSE BUT YOU !!
RESENT THE EVIL THAT PLAGUES THE COUNTRY, KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BLADE TIP AND PRAY THAT THE BLADE HAS BEEN HONED TO PERFECTION...
FATHER
...

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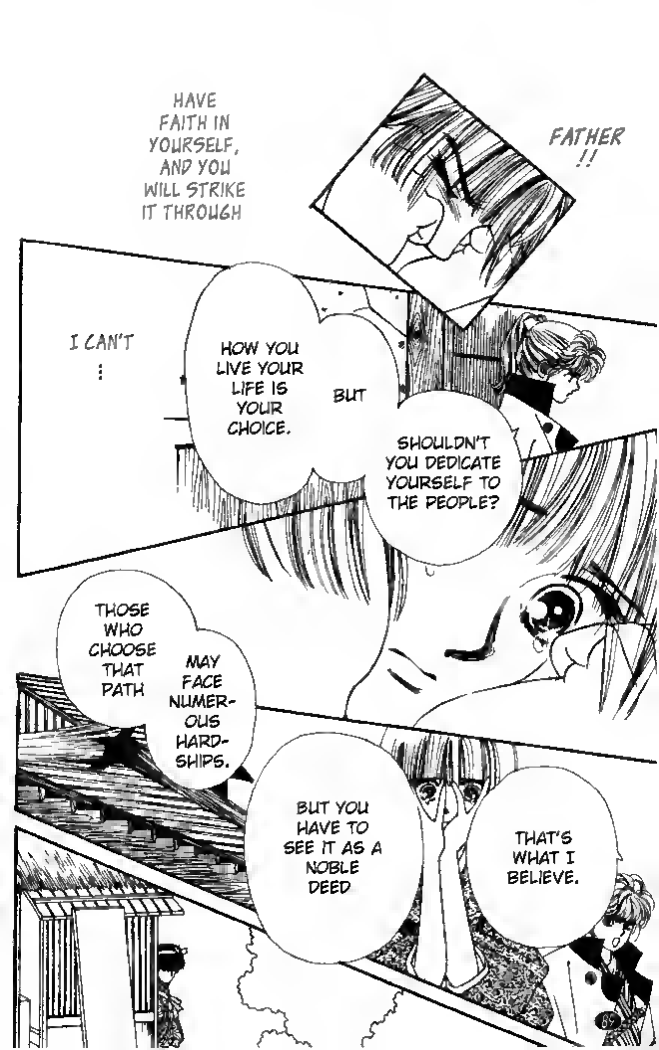
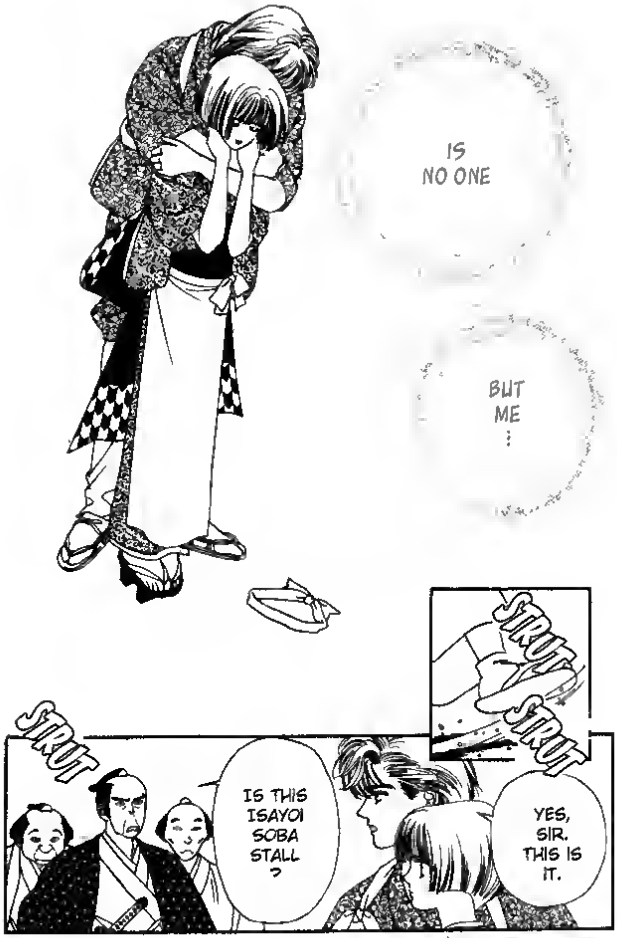

HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELF, AND YOU WILL STRIKE IT THROUGH
FATHER !!
I CAN'T ⋮
HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE IS YOUR CHOICE.
BUT
SHOULDN'T YOU DEDICATE YOURSELF TO THE PEOPLE?
THOSE WHO CHOOSE THAT PATH
MAY FACE NUMEROUS HARDSHIPS.
BUT YOU HAVE TO SEE IT AS A NOBLE DEED
THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.

I'LL HOLD ON TO MY FAITH AND WAIT FOR YOU
AND I BELIEVE IN YOU.
IN EDO !!

THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN RESCUE EDO
IS NO ONE BUT YOU ...
IT'S CHILLY TODAY. LET'S CLOSE UP EARLY.
YEAH.
ARE YOU DONE ?

THE SKY LOOKS LIKE IT'S EXPECTING THE FIRST DROP OF SNOW.
SANGETSU!?
AND THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN RESCUE THIS WOUNDED MAN



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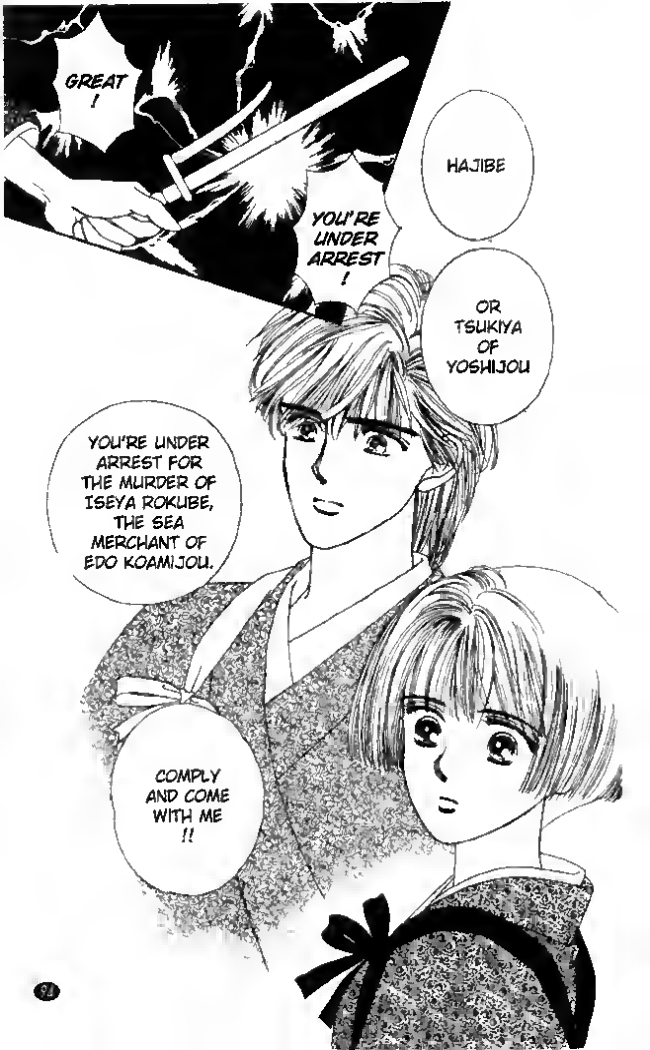
GREAT !
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST !
HAJIBE
OR TSUKIYA OF YOSHIJOU
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR THE MURDER OF ISEYA ROKUBE, THE SEA MERCHANT OF EDO KOAMIJOU.
COMPLY AND COME WITH ME !!

嵐花